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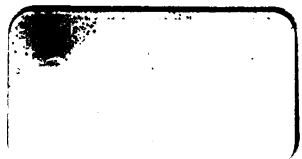
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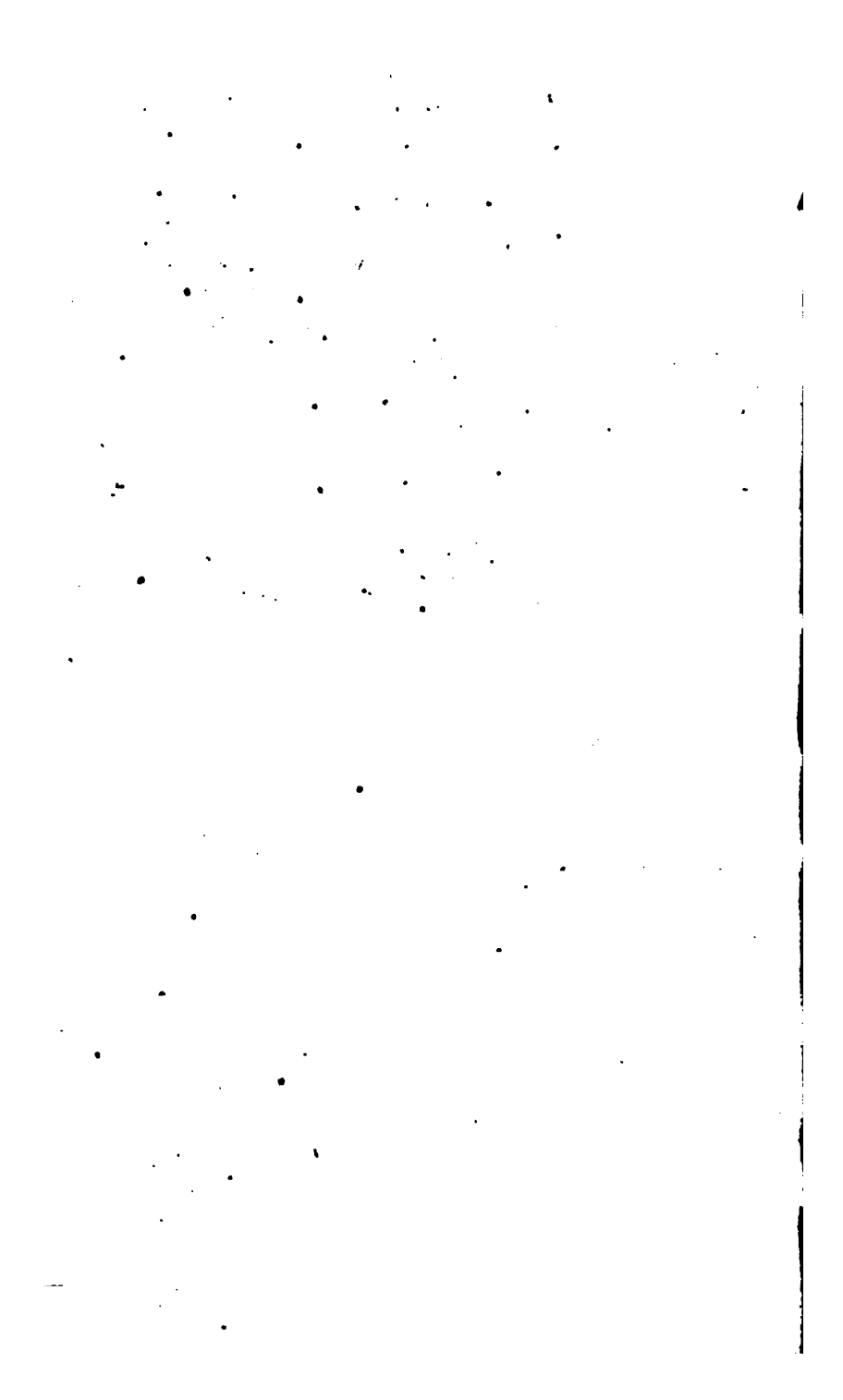
PAUL PENDRIL:

OR,

SPORT AND ADVENTURE IN CORSICA.

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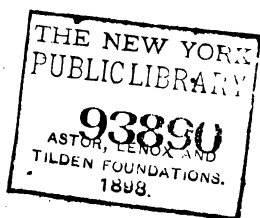
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PAUL PENDRIL.

CHAPTER I.

En age, segnes,
Rumpe moras ; vocat ingenti clamore Cithæron,
Taygetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus equorum ;
Et vox assensu nemorum ingeminata remugit.

ON the evening of the 10th of August, 18—, two English gentlemen descended from the railway station at Marseilles, and having placed their live and dead baggage in the hands of a Commissionaire, proceeded at once to the new harbour of La Joliette, where a mail-steamer was lying, steam up, and outward bound for the island of Corsica.

The good ship seemed to fret at her moorings, like a fiery steed eager and panting for the course ; but the mails, not yet on board, checked her departure, and thus gave ample time for the clearance and embarkation of the tardy impedimenta. These, consisting of portmanteaus, gun-cases, one of Edgington's small bell-tents, a brace of spaniels, a Brittany wolf-hound, and a dark

wire-haired deer-hound, were soon shipped under the convoy of Will Patey, piqueur and henchman to the two travellers. On the arrival of the mail-bags, the noise, the bustle, the hurry-scurry of the crew, each of whom in his turn gave the word of command, as though he had been suddenly jerked into power, excited the henchman's wonder not a little; this being his first interview with the French marine, and his first acquaintance with that spirit of equality which pervades the Gallic race. He was destined, however, to know more of it ere he quitted the French dominions.

"Sir," said he to Captain Paul Pendril, who stood near the spaniels, treating them and amusing himself by tossing bits of biscuit into their expectant jaws—"this, sir, is a strange fashion 'twixt master and man. I reckon our tars had better swallow their quids than stand upon the quarter-deck and speak up in this way."

"True, Will; these people are a livelier and more impulsive race than ours; but give them their heads—or rather let them have their say, and then you can guide them with a packthread."

"I can't tell how that may be, sir; but I've heard our old clerk say (and he was captain of the fore-top on board the *Royal Sovereign* when

the brave Collingwood led the van) that obedience to orders was a sailor's first duty."

"Quite right, too, Will."

"Yes; and I mind his words when he'd got a mug or two of white ale aboard—'A Frenchman will talk you hull down, but an Englishman will sink him ere he spins out his yarn.' And then he'd hit the table with a whack, and protest that one British heart was as big as three French ones; ay! and he firmly believed it too."

"That certainly was the creed of those days, and a good thing it was for old England that her sons had faith in it; but since that time we have become better acquainted with our neighbours, and know them to be as noble, as brave, and as high-spirited a race as the world ever saw."

In the meanwhile the *Carlo Maria*, now under full steam, was quickly in blue water; and Monte Christo and Castel d'If, no longer prominent objects in the foreground, were becoming at every stroke of the piston, less and less distinct in the dark and receding landscape.

As the good ship sped forward on her appointed course, the bustle on board, like all other troubles, came to an end; our travellers, if not already predisposed for rest, soon became so under the influence of a gentle ripple that chafed against her bows, while the regular and monotonous tone

of the engine tended not a little to induce a quiescent and soporific feeling. The sea was in a delightful good humour: clear, calm, and unruffled, without a wrinkle to disfigure her dignified old face; and, as night had long drawn her curtains o'er the scene, the few passengers withdrew one by one to their several berths, and committed their priceless lives, without a doubt or a scruple on the subject, to the care of—the watch on deck. But it must not be inferred that the Great Watch on high, whose power “stilleth the raging of the sea and the noise of the waves” was unremembered by our travellers; on the contrary, they had been early instructed as well to offer daily thanksgiving for past mercies as to pray for future blessings; and on this occasion that first of duties was not neglected.

But now it is high time to let the reader know something more of our travellers, and the object of their visit to Corsica.

At the time of our history the elder of the two gentlemen had barely arrived at what may be called the full flower of manhood; he was thirty-four years of age, and if the Homeric epithet of θεοείκελος could ever be applied to the person of a human being it would scarcely be an assumption of poetic license to apply it to him. “He was a man all over,” brave as the British

Lion himself, yet a very woman in the tenderness and unselfish nature of his heart. It was a common saying in the regiment to which he belonged, on every occasion where sympathy was sought or good service needed, "Oh, tell Paul Pendril; and if you just touch his tender string you may draw him to any amount." This, if it could be called so, was his weak point; but weak only in its resemblance to that help-meet nature which is the crown and glory of a woman. As a British officer and a gentleman should ever be, he was not only strict but chivalrous in his love of truth and honour; and anxious as I am to record the merits of a man with whom I lived in daily association for twelve long years, it would indeed be unjust to his memory if I failed to chronicle the noblest of all his virtues, namely, that of charity itself. That "excellent gift," which an inspired apostle has declared takes precedence of all virtues, was his in its fullest and brightest form; and as a broad, copious, fertilizing stream spreads a beneficial influence on the barren soil over which it flows, so his example brought many a blessing in its train, and touched and softened many a heart hitherto harder than the nether millstone. Thus a kindly word was ever on his lips in extenuation of the faults of others; and as it occasionally happened in the

large circle of his acquaintance that ever and anon one fell from his rank, degraded, either by folly or vice, Paul Pendril not only never cast a stone at him, but braved many a storm of indignation from his friends as he stooped to comfort and raise the fallen wretch.

Of his accomplishments as a horseman it need only be observed that the late Mr. Assheton Smith, himself the *crème de la crème*, has been known to say he had probably seen many as good a man across country on a *made* horse, but never so good a one on a *raw* thoroughbred colt. "Captain Pendril," said he, "takes hold of him by the head, and puts him in such resolute form at his fences, that in a few runs the horse becomes a perfect hunter. Give me Pendril and Anstruther Thompson against the world for getting their horses out of difficulties and for bringing them home at the end of the longest run."

His passion for the chase, especially for the wildest of all chases, that of the fox, was inbred and irrepressible; his father and ancestors had been masters of hounds celebrated in song, and, in conjunction with the pack and property, which by the death of an elder brother fell early to his lot, he had inherited a full share of their sylvan tendencies. What could be more natural than for a man thus bred to follow the chase? or,

rather, what better occupation could a country gentleman adopt for preserving the *mens sana in corpore sano* than this healthful, invigorating, and innocent recreation? Man is defined to be a hunting animal; he is ever in chase from the day that he first pursues the painted butterfly o'er the lawn to that in which a figured muslin or an ankle of unquestionable form catches his ravished eye. Then there is the chase of fashion, ambition, lucre, and a thousand other allurements wherein the devil himself drags the herring, and in the pursuit of which the hunter himself becomes the victim in the end.

Pendril's chase was of a different fashion from this: his goddess was Diana, the sole deity in the Pantheon whose moral character was unimpeachable; and to her, from his earliest youth, he had confessed with a lisping tongue; and to her in after years, in the full vigour of manhood, he had bowed the knee with a devotion which all the gods of Olympus might have envied. And one there certainly was, if there be any truth in mythology, who looked down on his exclusive predilection with an eye of jealousy and disfavour.

Pendril was a bachelor; and although many a shaft had sped from the bright eyes of more than one belle in his native county under the

very auspices of Venus herself, still this case-hardened, unimpressible squire had hitherto escaped, as though by a charmed life, from the battery to which he had been exposed. Cytherea, the triumphant possessor of that fatal apple, and the cause of many a war and many a siege scarcely less memorable than that of Troy itself, was, it is believed, for once at fault. One or two of his most intimate friends, however, expressed strong doubts as to his immunity from the common lot of man, and even went so far as to aver that, if the sanctuary of his heart were penetrated, a cicatrix would be found concealing a wound deep, tender, and unhealable—

Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.

At all events there was a mystery in the matter, the history of which will now probably baffle the gossip and curiosity of all his friends.

“What a glorious passage!” said Pendril to his friend Temple, as they entered the magnificent gulf at the head of which stands the little town of Ajaccio.

“Thoroughly enjoyable,” said the other, looking at his watch, “and just twenty hours from La Joliette. Our plain sailing, however, is nearly at an end; for, to judge of the desolate features of those hills, rocky, declivitous, and matted with

brushwood down to the very water's edge, our course will be anything but a smooth one over that wild and rugged surface."

"With all my heart," replied Pendril; "the charm of the chase is enhanced a thousandfold by the difficulties which attend its pursuit. As the author of the 'Boatman' says so beautifully:—

For the sport of man's strife
Gives the zest to man's life;
Without it, his manhood dies;
Be it jewel or toy, not the prize gives the joy,
But the striving to win the prize.

And the more the sport differs from that foul German fashion of slaughtering game in a 'hot corner' the more I shall value it."

"Well, a day or two in a season is no bad amusement, with a high wind and a cloud of rocketers."

"To my mind, Temple, it is utterly un-English, utterly at variance with genuine sport, and most impolitic. In the first place, save a retriever at the heels, you dispense with that merriest of all accompaniments, a team of bustling spaniels, the use of which I regard as indispensable to the true enjoyment of cover shooting. In the next, you demoralize a whole community by the excessive preservation of game, for, unless the game be most abundant, there can be no successful battûe; then, as a matter of

course, the Kaffirs of the country fall upon the *feræ naturæ*, and poaching becomes a less irksome if not a more gainful business than honest labour; then follows closely in its wake the usual consequence of rapine, outrage, and murder, while the union and the gaol stand gloomily in the rear."

As Pendril denounced with his usual warmth the mischief and suffering arising from a system to which he had so great a repugnance, the fire of his eye seemed to kindle as it wandered o'er the savage and desolate grandeur of the scene through which the steamer was then passing. On either side of the Gulf of Ajaccio rose the rugged hills from the level of the sea up to the very arch of heaven. Not a human being, nor a bird, nor a beast could be seen to animate the lonely picture with a trace of life. The whole country, as far as the eye could ken, seemed to be one mass of dark evergreen jungle, and it was only by the help of a powerful telescope that the bare and desert character of the mountains above could be fairly seen. Huge granite cliffs, denuded of soil and impending o'er deep ravines, stood out in bold relief from the clumps of hardy pine that seemed to thrive even in those sterile heights.

And now it was that Pendril, with that keen

appreciation of wild nature which is known to the enthusiast alone, turned to his friend, and exclaimed—

“Look, Temple, at that grand wilderness towering to the skies! Yonder is the home of the mouflon. There, far removed from the haunts of man, and far above the scrub of the beech-forest, we shall hunt the wild animal in his native solitudes.”

“I earnestly hope,” said the other, who unfortunately had a *but* for every proposition, “that your expectations may be well-founded; but I have always observed that the anticipation of sport is seldom or never equalled by its realization. Like the cloud-architect, we are all of us apt to indulge in fancies which are distant, visionary, and uncertain: we shall be able to judge more about it when we have bagged a mouflon or two.”

“Verily, Temple,” said Pendril, pleasantly, “if the Pythagorean doctrine be a true one we shall see you at some future day stuck up in a blasted oak, the very type of that *sinistra cornix* which we read of in our early days, and which I once heard a schoolfellow translate into ‘a left-handed crow,’ and thereby gain a *sobriquet* which he will carry with him to the grave. At least let a poor fellow hope for sport when he has come so far for it.”

At that moment the *Carlo Maria* hove to 'neath the very walls of Ajaccio, at the head of a harbour capacious enough to contain the navies of the world. In an instant a swarm of men whose language was half French and half Italian, and whose dress was that of the Calabrian boor, sprang up the ship's side, and pounced upon everything in the shape of portable luggage upon which they could lay their claws. As ill-looking a set of harpies were they as any Roman *facchini*, or even as the one-eyed porters of Jersey.

The luggage, indeed, fell to their lot—there was no help for that; but when they attempted to take possession of the dogs the henchman offered so stout and so fierce a resistance that they were for once fairly discomfited.

"I would not trust the parson's old cur, much less your honour's dogs, with such a lot of gipsies," said he, appealing to Pendril; "they look to me as if they would as soon eat as skin them."

When Pendril, however, assured the faithful Will that these men, so profuse in their offers of service, were the accredited servants of the French Government, he unwillingly permitted himself, dogs, baggage, and all, to be conducted to the Hôtel de l'Europe, which afforded, it was said, the best accommodation in the island.

Before our friends had been quartered twenty-

four hours at the Hôtel de l'Europe they found it would be necessary to pass at least three or four more days at Ajaccio ere they attempted to advance into the interior. In consequence of the extent to which the murderous use of fire-arms had been carried in the island, the French Government had lately issued an order prohibiting the natives especially from carrying arms ; but the *permis de chasse* was still obtainable by the stranger on his giving a satisfactory assurance to the préfet that his object was the *chasse* alone. So, after sundry visits to the préfecture, which were productive of the usual tardy results, Pendril was asked if he had any friend resident in the island to whom he could refer for confirmation of his own statement. Most fortunately for him he had provided himself with letters of introduction to H.B.M.'s consul, or in all probability his chance of ever seeing and bagging a mouflon in his native Corsican wilds would have ended with that official question.

His answer in the affirmative, however, seemed to satisfy the préfet, who, really wishing to throw no needless impediment in the *chasseur's* way, was simply fulfilling the terms of an act which the French Government deemed necessary for the security of that island.

But here was fresh cause for further delay ;

the British consul resided at Bastia, ninety odd miles away, at the north-eastern end of Corsica, and until he could be apprised by post of the position in which Pendril and his party were placed, and return the needed answer, a detention of at least three days awaited the impatient travellers. . Pendril and Temple at once saw that submission was a matter of necessity, but the henchman was in despair; the vermin in the stable had already so infested the dogs that their coats stood on end like that of a coiled hedgehog, and, to add to his trouble, he could get no flesh for their food.

"In one week, your honour," said he, "what with the loss of blood and the want of good meat, Wildfire's muscle will become as slack as an old woman's stocking; the Indian meal, too, don't seem to suit his appetite, and I should like to get away from the town before his condition fails him."

Will's sympathy was unmistakable; he stood by the side of the fine deer-hound, with his hand resting on his head, while the uplifted and sagacious countenance of the noble animal seemed to express a consciousness that he was the subject of his master's solicitude.

"At all events," continued the henchman, "if the hound don't do his duty it wont be his

fault. You must keep up the fuel if you want a good fire."

"Cheer up, Will," said Pendril; "if there's a leg of beef in the market of Ajaccio, Wildfire shall not go without his soup."

Thus assured by his master, in whom he had unbounded confidence, the faithful Will, running his eye over the development of muscle which, like a roll of wire-cordage, traversed the loins and quarters of the hound, pronounced his conviction that no beast with or without horns, and scarcely with wings, could outstrip Wildfire over the rugged surface of a mountain gorge.

"That hound is what he seems to be," said Pendril, addressing Temple, "the descendant of a patrician race famous for its blood, bone, and courage. The Frasers, indeed, from whom the puppy was obtained as a high favour, trace the pedigree of Wildfire back to the days of the first barons of their family, amongst whom a legend prevailed that the great progenitor of the race was no less than Cuchullin's hound in Ossian's Fingal. Bred, as Burns says,

After some dog in Highland song."

"Don't appeal to poetry, for heaven's sake, for the pedigree of a Scotch deer-hound," said Temple; "though, for the matter of that, you

had far better trace him to Luath than John of Lorn's slough-hound."

"True," replied Pendril; "the Frasers love the memory of the good King Robert, and Barbour is their daily text-book. It would never do to refer the blood of their favourite race to such a base origin: to

The blood-hound that bayed for her fugitive king.

The whole clan would be in arms at 'such a supposition."

There must have been something in the tone of Pendril's voice to attract the hound's attention; or it might have been simply the sound of his own name that occasionally caught his ear; at all events it was quite evident, by the steady and gentle stroke of his tail, that Wildfire perfectly well understood he was himself the subject of his master's kind notice. That mute language of the tail conveyed the animal's ideas with no doubtful meaning: it expressed gratitude, love, and devotion with as much significance, ay! and with perhaps more truth than the human tongue could have done it.

At this moment the *maitre d'hôtel*, who had accompanied our friends to the préfecture, informed them, with apparent regret, that the post had left the town at least three hours for *di quà*

dei monti; that is, for the region on the Bastia side of the mountains, so that the letters could not be forwarded until the following morning. Then, as if to soften the chagrin which had so evidently risen on his guest's faces, he asked permission to introduce to them a Monsieur Tennyson who was then staying at the Hôtel de l'Europe, and was an accomplished chasseur.

"There is a peculiarity about the gentleman," said he, "that must recommend him to your esteem. He has taught himself the English language in order that he might read the works of his namesake the Poet Laureate, for whom he has so high an appreciation and regard that I verily believe he will make him his heir. Your country, too, he thinks the finest and freest in the world; and having been a great traveller and a close observer, few men are better qualified to judge of such matters than himself."

"We shall be delighted to know Monsieur Tennyson," said Pendril. "I can quite understand the combination of mouflon-hunting with the love of poetry. The grandeur of nature inspires the soul with sympathy; and the Greeks were quite right in dedicating Mount Parnassus to the Muses, and in describing the Castalian fountains as springing from a hill that 'looks down upon the clouds.'"

"You talk of the Greeks and the Muses with the glibness of an Oxford Coach," said Temple. "I should like to read with you, Pendril, for my next Examination, if you'll tell me after which of the Ajaxes this town is named."

"After neither; that is a mere clap-trap of the etymologists. And as to the honour which you are good enough to propose for me, I would far rather earn my bread by handling the 'Berkeley Hunt' team,

All brilliant in Brummagem leather,

than by cramming young poults with Attic food for which they have no relish. But now for Monsieur Tennyson; he perhaps will tell us something about Ajaccio."

There, for the present, let us leave the travellers, if not in clover, at least in better quarters than they met with during the remainder of their campaign in Corsica.

CHAPTER II.

Up ! up to yon cliff ! like a king to his throne,
 O'er the black silent forest piled lofty and lone—
 A throne which the eagle is glad to resign
 Unto footsteps so fleet and so fearless as thine.

WILSON.

THE wild features of the mountain side have been so well described by the glowing language of Wilson, Scott, and St. John, and every passage incidental to the chase of the glorious red-deer has been so charmingly illustrated by the pencil of that distinguished artist, Sir Edwin Landseer, that Highland scenes and Highland life have become familiar to us all, and the sport of the forest has been brought home to our very firesides. It matters not that we have never plunged into the dark depths of the Trosachs, nor climbed to the spot where Fitz-James brought the gallant grey to a dead stand-still ; that we have never listened to Corrievrechan's roar, nor brought down the monarch of Benmore from his glorious throne, alas ! to the back of a sheltie ; all these things are as well known to us

by the mind's eye as if we had had the positive experience of a Ross or a Saltoun in their practical enjoyment.

M. Tennyson, as we shall soon see, was really what the *maitre d'hôtel* described him to be—a great traveller and an accomplished *chasseur*; and, having tried his hand at all kinds of forest game in various countries, he found himself, like Alexander the Great, with nothing left for him to conquer: however, he remembered the mouflon, and had come hither for the express purpose of stalking that shy and unapproachable animal in his mountain home. Pendril and Temple, too, had long been accustomed to the best hunting, and to the best wild sport that the British Isles could afford; and, perhaps, somewhat sated therewith, had now travelled further a-field, to this land of Corsica, lying midway betwixt the Alps and the Atlas mountains; to a region untouched and undefiled by London agents; and to hunting-grounds on which their appetite for the chase—that is, for the real wild article—might be gratified to its fullest extent.

But they very soon found that he who undertakes such an expedition must cast behind him all preconceived notions of downy beds and comfortable quarters, and must be prepared to rough it in every sense of the word, externally, internally, and infernally; for the countrymen are

charged to the muzzle with the volcanic element ; the cuisine might suit the harpies, but would scarcely please even a modern Spaniard ; and as for the sleeping apartments in general, they were already so crowded by inmates possessing large families and bloodthirsty in the extreme, that a quiet night's rest was a thing rarely to be enjoyed. Well might any of the tribe be compared to that daughter of the horse-leech which cried, " Give, give !" and which he of Venusia simply described as

Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

But if the drawbacks and difficulties of campaigning in the mountain fastnesses of Corsica were far greater than they are ; if the brigands were even less placable, and the interior less accessible than it is, still the chase of the mouflon—the main object of our travellers' sport—amply compensated them for all the hardship, ay, and for every danger to which they were exposed.

High up, far above the highest scrub of the forest, on the very verge of what is all but perpetual snow, with no living creature but the eagle above him, the mouflon ranges in comparative security. What a noble specimen is he of the genus *ovis* ! look at his grand pair of spiral horns, his dilated eye, and his wild mountain

visage. He might be, from his size and his fleece, a descendant of that beast that bore Ulysses in safety from the den of the Cyclops ; nay, let us go further back, to a more remote but less questionable history ; why not a collateral of that ram which was " caught in the thicket by his horns," and which " Abraham took and offered up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son ?" His horns at least might favour the presumption.

That he is a true sheep there can be no doubt ; and yet he bears a certain affinity to the deer tribe in his freedom of gait and lofty bearing ; his covering, too, has a large admixture of hair with the wool ; his colour is that of the chamois, and his mutton is equal in fibre and quality to the finest fallow venison. Many naturalists have supposed that the mouflon is the original parent of the sheep ; but the probability is that he is the descendant of those which have escaped from the dominion of man, and which, in a country like Corsica, where the wolf does not exist, would increase and multiply, and, after a time, assume all the characteristics of a real wild animal.

To approach him as he stands in bold relief between you and the sky on a pinnacle of granite crag, from which he commands, either by nose or eye, a circular and boundless view of

the wilderness around him, needs the craft and adroitness of a Pawnee Loup Indian. All the precautions required in the chase of the chamois, the ibex, and the "stag of ten," with respect to wind, dress, knowledge of the gorges, and a thousand details, which experience and the circumstances of the moment can alone suggest, must be practised in pursuit of the mouflon. Patience, endurance, and a never-flagging zeal, are qualities indispensable to success; and the hunter who does not possess them had far better stay at home than attempt to follow the mouflon in the wild and rugged declivities of a Corsican mountain.

Unlike his countrymen in general, there was nothing about M. Tennyson to indicate strong nationality; *la belle France* indeed claimed him for her son, but he was a cosmopolitan in every sense of the word.

He had married in early life a daughter of the noble house of St. Prix, in Lower Brittany, had lost her in her first confinement; and from that day, forsaking his beautiful old *château* on the Loire, he had wandered over the world, now tracking the elk in the snowy solitudes of the Bay of Fundy; or, after a fierce encounter with a wounded lion, laving his wearied limbs in the glassy wave of the Limpopo; and hither he had lately come, expressly to hunt the mouflon, and

to compare that animal with the argali, the wild sheep of the Caucasus, in Western Asia. For more than thirty years he had not been so near as he now was to his native home; he had left it in the morning of life, in the prime of early manhood, when his hair was darker than the raven's wing, and his step as light as that of the roe-deer; but sorrow and the finger of time had been busy at work, and he was now returning to the scenes of his youth a grey-headed man. But, all over, he looked like a grand stag-headed oak, which, though denuded above, is at heart as sturdy and as stout as ever.

On coming forward to meet our friends, they were much struck by the unaffected cordiality of his manner; he greeted them with no ceremonious salutations, after the fashion of the *ancien régime*, but just lifting his hat, tendered at once "the right hand of fellowship," just as an English country gentleman welcomes a guest whom it delights him to honour.

"So, gentlemen," he said, with a fair English accent, "I understand you have come to Corsica to hunt the mouflon—the very object which brought me hither on my homeward route. I, too, like yourselves, have had some difficulty about the *permis de chasse*; but with a friend at court such small matters are easily managed, and I hope to get mine in a few days."

"But," said Temple, "I very much doubt if the authorities have the power to make our cases exceptional; our references, too, may not satisfy the préfet."

"In that case I should start at once for Cagliari: the mouflon in the Sardinian mountains, if not so abundant, are equally wild with those of Corsica."

"And we should be delighted to join you—that is, if you would not object to our company," said Pendril.

"Certainly not," replied the Frenchman; "three guns would not be one too many—the gorges require that number at least."

Temple, however, reminded his friend that the long vacation came to an end at last; and that if he did not go up for his great-go at Michaelmas, the head of St. Hubert's would give him a hint to migrate; he was quite ready to sail for Sardinia, but he must return to Oxford by the 20th of October.

"That you can easily do, Temple; and I do hope you will not only go up, but get through on this occasion. As to a migration, the hospitable old walls of Kettle Hall may possibly afford you an asylum; but, after that, if your wings again collapse, there is nothing left for you but the penal settlements."

"Thank you, Pendril, I should prefer a Hansom at home; but, seriously, next time or never for the promised land: at present a whole desert of books lies between me and my degree; and then there's the Jordan to cross in the shape of an examination—an awkward fence, if you are not in condition."

"Ay, that's just the point: in the field, if you mean to stay at your work, you must begin at the beans in good time; he who only crams at the last will generally come to grief—either he is thrown out of his stride, or the country is too deep for him, or the fences grow as the pace improves, till at length the chase sweeps ahead, and he is brought in pitiful distress to an untimely and ignominious stand-still. It is thus in the schools; men will not make due preparation; the examiner soon finds they are not in form, and of course floors them like a set of ninepins."

How long this conversation might have been continued it is difficult to guess; Pendril, however, was going on to say something about "*sudavit et alsit*," when M. Tennyson remarked that, as at all events they had the prospect of passing a few days at Ajaccio, the time might be profitably employed in making the necessary arrangements for their campaign in the forest.

Accordingly, the purchase of a mountain pony was the first object of Pendril's attention; and, as the island of Corsica is renowned for its sturdy and sure-footed breed, he had little difficulty in choosing from a string of a dozen the very model of a Tartar cob. Although not more than twelve hands in height, his breadth of beam and limb-power was prodigious; at the same time the obliquity of his shoulder and slightly cat-hammed hocks indicated the utmost liberty of action; and, to crown all, his head and eyes were those of an Arab from the plains of Dongola. Will, to whose charge the little black beauty was consigned, confessed at once that nothing he had ever seen on Dartmoor, or even on Exmoor, could equal this specimen of the Corsican hills—an admission, on his part, for which, knowing his intense partiality for everything in the shape of Devon stock, Pendril was scarcely prepared.

A pack-saddle, fitted up with side-straps and a strong padded crupper, was soon manufactured by a French saddler, and on this were adjusted a pair of capacious saddle-bags, the tent, and sundry accompaniments considered necessary for the expedition. Although at first sight the baggage appeared somewhat formidable, yet the pony stepped gaily and freely under his burden;

and if from a foal he had been accustomed to the penates of a gipsy, he could not have borne the pack-saddle and its incumbrances with more steadiness or less alarm. He would have carried, in emergency, a ten-stone man on the top of all, and that, too, in safety over the mountain roads of Corsica, which, according to Will's estimate, were twice as steep and twice as rugged as Diamond-lane upon Dartmoor. So far the trial of the pony was quite satisfactory; and that he might be named appropriately of course they called him the Corporal, after Napoleon Bonaparte; for he was not only bred on the native soil, but was actually bought in the Rue Charles, under the windows of the very house in which the modern Hannibal was born. And now, having settled that weighty matter, the gentlemen, under the guidance of the *maître d'hôtel*, a loquacious, good-natured man, proceeded on a tour of inspection over the little town of Ajaccio.

At this period, which was long subsequent to the fall of the first Emperor, the interfusion of the Italian and French races seemed to have made but little progress. Although the submission to France of the whole island of Corsica took place in June, 1769, one month before the birth of the great Napoleon, the inhabitants still

continued to be true Italians, and loved to maintain the dress, habits, and language of that country with which they had been so long allied. The old nobility of Corsica, branches of which the family of Napoleon Bonaparte, both on his father's and mother's side, were indisputably proved to be, talked of Pascal Paoli and the days of their stormy independence, as if they would again hail with fervour the return of such a leader, and cast off the foreign yoke under which the island had so long writhed. Of course there were French officials *partout*; every post of honour or emolument was filled by a Frenchman; and, in fact, the pride of the native Corsicans revolted from the notion of administering new laws imposed upon them by the supreme government. Indeed, all whose circumstances enabled them to do so, held sedulously aloof from official life, and refused to undertake duties the performance of which would have lowered the high standard of their own self-respect. Consequently, an Englishman, at that time, was far more likely to be welcomed by the best families of the island on his own merits as an English gentleman, than if he had come recommended to them by all the influence of the French court.

M. Tennyson, in his alliance with our English

friends, soon found the advantage of such good company ; while frequently, on the other hand, they had to thank him for many a favour and many a kind attention, which, chiefly on his account, they had received from the French officers. So, unaided by Tidd Pratt, they established among themselves a mutual benefit society, which, in their subsequent adventures in the forest, and especially amongst the mountaineers, proved to be of the greatest service to each of them.

Having wandered at their leisure through the Rue Napoléon, the Rue Fesch, and the Place Letitia—streets insignificant in construction, but recording names which give a world-wide distinction to this island—the trio soon found themselves in the Place du Diamant, by far the prettiest spot in the little city. From this point of the promontory the view to seawards is remarkably fine, while the vine-clad hills which slope away from the water's edge are decorated, as they mount to the skies, with the olive, the arbutus, and the wild myrtle. A visit to the old Saracen burying-ground, which consists of subterranean vaults, after the fashion of the catacombs at Naples, gave M. Tennyson an opportunity of expatiating on the power and magnificence of the ancient Moors.

"It was by their prowess," said he, "that the Goths were driven from these shores, and Corsica first became an independent kingdom. And to this day the island bears on its shield the grim Moor's head, in token of the rule under which it was swayed."

Then they sauntered to the Cappella de' Grechi, where the youthful Napoleon is said to have passed many a day in dreamy contemplation, and where his beautiful mother was wont to seek and to rouse him from his romantic reveries. He loved the spot, it was said, and in early manhood frequently retired thither for the purpose, perhaps, of brooding over those marvellous schemes which in after years made him the terror and the wonder of the world. The *maitre d'hôtel*, however, who was thoroughly well versed in the Napoleonic history, discredited the popular belief in this matter. He knew, from the best authority, what had been the sole object of Napoleon's visit to Cappella de' Grechi: it was a lady. What else was it likely to be? Francesca Rivarola, the jewel of that distinguished family, and the beauty of the island, had captivated his youthful heart, and was for many a year the sole possessor of his first and truest love. To these quiet and secluded haunts the impressionable youth was wont to resort, pensive

alone on one point—the fair Francesca. Higher aspiration he had none than the possession of that treasure, then beyond his reach.

Ambition was yet asleep in his bosom, but who shall say it was not roused into action (and what that was the world well knows) by the all-powerful voice of Love, the master passion of the human heart? Napoleon, a poor lieutenant in the Grenoble regiment of artillery, and the second son of a still poorer avocat, who had been ruined by the Jesuits, had nothing but his hand to offer to a daughter of the house of Rossi; and this was deemed insufficient; his head was not taken into account. So the flame of love set fire to an ambition which in a short period consumed mighty kingdoms, and burst like a volcano over the whole of Europe.* In after years, when Napoleon stood on the pinnacle of glory and danger, and the fair Francesca had become the Lady Abbess of Santa Clara, Madame Bonaparte, his mother, would often tell her friends, with a sigh, that her son had missed a Corsican prize of great value, and that the loss had cast a dark shade over the destiny of his life.

Unlike some of the towns of Italy which weary

* Russia, if not in his power, was at least in his influence. Prussia was at his beck. Italy was his vassal. Holland was in his grasp. Spain at his nod. Turkey in his toils. Portugal at his feet.—*Sheridan's Speech in the House of Commons.*

the sight-seer with an endless succession of palaces, picture-galleries, and churches stuffed to repletion with saints, relics, and statuary, the modest stock of Ajaccio was soon brought to a close; and when our travellers had paid their respects to the cathedral, inspected the entry of Napoleon's baptism in the parish register, visited the substantial old-fashioned house in the Rue Charles, and peeped into the very room in which the hero was born, the objects of attraction were fairly exhausted: there was nothing more to be seen on this side of the mountains. The inhabitants, however, were really worth looking at: the men, in general, seemed a frank, open-hearted race, sturdy, and short in stature, and exhibiting in their gait and demeanour an independence that could not be mistaken. In dress they were far more Italian than French, and appeared to have adopted a cloth of a chocolate hue, which is so universally worn that it has almost become the distinctive and national colour of the island. The material of which it is woven is doubtless the home-spun wool of the native sheep in its simple undyed state, which will probably account for the general adoption of that sombre hue. Though good-natured and obliging, the men had that peculiar flash of the eye which, like a light-house, gives notice that the coast is dangerous,

and that collision would be likely to cause a wreck.

Not so the women: nothing could well be sweeter than the expression of their classic faces, and certainly nothing more attractive than their soft and unaffected manner to strangers. The ease with which they moved under heavy weights, balanced on their heads, betokened an early apprenticeship to that labour; while the habit no doubt had contributed not a little to produce the erect carriage and well-proportioned figures for which they were so fairly renowned.

Two or three days after his visit to the Cappella de' Grechi, Pendril was strolling alone in the suburbs on the hill-side of Ajaccio, and, as he was hourly expecting the return of the mail from Bastia, he turned his steps towards the main road which led over the mountains in the direction of that city. As he slowly and with difficulty emerged from a wayside thicket into which he had wandered, now impeded by blocks of rugged stone, which were scattered broadcast o'er the ground, and now forcing his way through the *macchie*, as it almost held him in its tangled arms, he was somewhat startled by the sudden arrival of Wild-fire, who came bounding up to him with that exuberance of joy which a hound will show when he has unexpectedly found his master.

Pendril was puzzled at his appearance ; and as the hound had not followed him by nose, but had come from an opposite direction, he could only conjecture that Temple or Will must be somewhere within hail, either down wind or within ken of the hound's vision. Pendril was not often taken aback, but he confessed to be so on this occasion. On putting up his Malvern glass, and sweeping the open, he discovered Temple in close conversation with a Corsican maiden, who had come to draw water at a well within range of the spot on which he then stood. The pitcher, one of Pompeian form, rested on the edge of the well, the very emblem of that which "Sweet Kitty" is said to have carried to the "Fair of Coleraine." Temple, doubtless thirsting for a draught, had inveigled the fair loiterer into a converse which, by the help of the eye and the broken language of his tongue, he managed to maintain with some fluency. At all events, the maiden seemed in no hurry to depart, and, to judge by her merry mood, which Pendril could plainly perceive, she seemed to be amused as well as interested in what Temple was saying to her.

Pendril had no sooner lifted his telescope than he dropped it again, as the thought rapidly occurred to him that his glass was intended rather for the mouflon than for making secret observa-

tions on the scene before him. But the sketch was enough; his imagination soon filled in the details which his knowledge of the world in general, and Temple in particular, told him would be employed for the completion of the picture.

Without a moment's hesitation he made straight for the well, determined to interrupt, at least for the present, a *tête-à-tête* which, to all appearance, both parties were too well disposed to continue, and which, if continued, might probably bring serious trouble to them and inconvenience to their friends.

As Pendril advanced from the brushwood, Temple was on one knee in the act of soliciting another draught from the hands of his fair Hebe, while the maiden, as she held the pitcher to his lips, seemed to be wholly engrossed with the occupation of gratifying his unwonted thirst.

Apparently, she was unconscious that the stock of water remained undiminished in the cruse, and that in reality the rogue at her feet was imbibing from her eye a sweet but subtle poison that would fret and fire his veins, and set his pulse a-dancing for many a day to come. Had she divined, in that artless moment, that the sole antidote for the dangerous draught would probably be fatal to her own happiness, would she have denied him that luxury? Look at her

sunny smile, and that perfect outline of Grecian feature, and see how the mixture of Moorish blood peeps out at her eyes ! and then ask if the flower excludes the honey-bee from its petals, robber and wanderer though he be.

Pendril had just time to observe, ere his approach was perceived, that Horace Vernet, when he painted that exquisite picture of "Rebekah at the Well," must have witnessed a very similar scene to this. The artist, however, draws largely on his powers of imagination ; for, while the damsel bends over him with her pitcher, the messenger of Abraham appears to be making his own game, and as he imbibes the refreshing draught, his eyes are feasting on the beauty of the fair Rebekah.

For a moment Pendril paused, as if loth to disturb so striking and so natural a scene ; but his good sense came to the rescue, reflecting that he who hesitates is lost, and that when there is a knot to cut the god should make his appearance with no unnecessary delay.

A loud shout from Pendril at a distance of one hundred yards brought Temple to his legs as if he had been electrified ; and the former scarcely needed to observe the colour that rose, and the shade that followed it o'er the brow of Temple to be aware that the latter regarded his

presence as an untimely if not an unwelcome intrusion. However, to put the best face on the matter, and at once to take the bull by the horns, he began in a sprightly tone of banter to attack him in the following way:—

“You’re an old soldier, Temple, to steal a march upon us in this way, and in such good company too.”

“Not much of a soldier, Pendril; but at all events my company up to the present moment has been unexceptionable.”

“Bravo, my boy! I like to see a thoroughbred kick when he feels the spur. Two hours ago I left you deep in the Georgics, and here you are now bending your knee to a water nymph; that shepherd Aristæus will bring you to trouble, if you follow his example, depend upon it.”

“Thanks for your advice, Pendril; but, valuable as it is, don’t squander it. Do you know how Sir Josiah Host gathered a sufficient sum to purchase that grand estate at Manhead? By minding his own business.”

A sharp interchange of hit and counter-hit was not likely to mend matters; but as Pendril for many reasons deemed it prudent to extinguish this infant flame, if possible, ere it burst forth into the full blaze of passion, in spite of

rebuffs he continued the assault bravely. In the meantime the fair Agnese, after inviting Pendril to take a draught from her pitcher, which he very thankfully accepted, balanced it again on the *faldetta* in which her head was attired ; then saying, " Addio !" to both gentlemen, she glided away easily and gracefully under the light burden up the craggy path which led to her mountain home.

Temple followed her with an eager gaze, as a fowler watches a bird that he means to mark down for a future shot ; and, as he was no diplomatist, that expression of his face did not escape Pendril's observation. Temple's antecedents in such matters, though scarcely twenty-four years of age, might have led his friend to the conclusion that *coûte qui coûte* Temple would seek further interviews with that fair girl. Pendril, however, was not to be easily thwarted : his sympathy, and, above all, his good feeling, armed him with a moral power the whole force of which he would use to crush this serpent's egg ; for, if once hatched, it would quickly assume the hydra form, and then be invincible.

" You are doubtless able to judge for yourself, Temple," said he ; " but I claim the privilege of an old friend of your father's, and, I trust, of yours too, to warn you that an entanglement

with a peasant girl must bring you to grief if you persevere in your present object."

"Grief is my normal condition, according to the Dons; and if I am not to be permitted, when—

Lovely Thais sits beside me,
to
Take the goods the gods provide me,

I see no chance of escape from that purgatory to which you and they would consign me even in this life."

"Better a purgatory in this world than the next, Temple! Your reason was given you to control your passion, and if you do not so use it you will pay the penalty sooner or later. But, independently of the moral view, there is another which, although less grave, is one which you have scarcely regarded with sufficient consideration, and that is, the temper of the natives. Revenge is a part of the Corsican creed, and all injuries offered to women are wiped out with blood. So beware of the stiletto or the musket-ball if you pursue this game much further."

Pendril, who had inferred quite correctly that this was neither the first nor an accidental meeting at the well, struck a chord when he spoke of revenge which vibrated in the breast of Temple. The very idea of bullets and stilettoes

roused his reckless nature, and only added fresh fuel to the flame already kindled within him ; so, breaking off the conversation abruptly by begging that Pendril would not further interfere in his private affairs, he came to the dangerous resolve that his passion for this love adventure should be gratified at any price.

CHAPTER III.

None are all evil—quickenings round his heart,
 One softer feeling would not yet depart ;
 Oft would he sneer at others as beguiled
 By passions worthy of a fool or child ;
 Yet 'gainst that passion vainly still he strove,
 And even in him it asks the name of Love.

THE CORSAIR.

TEN days after the scene at the well came at last the long-wished-for letters from Bastia ; and Pendril, looking forward to a speedy release from the *ennui* occasioned by his present inactive life, hurried away to the préfecture to present his credentials and to obtain the necessary *permis de chasse* with as little delay as possible. Temple's conduct, too, filled him with anxiety and apprehension : on the previous day he had absented himself for several hours from the hotel, and had taken with him the two spaniels, Brush and Dingle, to draw the macchie or scrub-covers on the mountain side ; and on this day, when the letters arrived, he was not forthcoming to accompany Pendril on his visit to the préfet, an omission which that official was very likely to resent by refusing to grant a *permis de chasse* to a man

who did not think it worth his while to make a personal application for such a favour.

Pendril's affable and straightforward manner had attracted the goodwill of the préfet at their first interview; and when he again presented himself at the bureau, he was not only received most graciously, but was offered a letter of introduction to the military governor residing at Corte. Now, it so happened that Pendril had been strongly advised to make this little city his head-quarters; and, as it stands almost in the centre of the island and in the very heart of the mountains, amore convenient point could not have been chosen for pursuing the mouflon with success, and at the same time for securing some of those necessities of life which even the wildest hunters cannot forego.

The préfet's offer was of course thankfully accepted; and when the usual *signes particulières* had been taken down, and the *signature du porteur* affixed to the document, it was handed to Pendril with best wishes that game might abound, and that a magnificent *chasse* might be the result of his sojourn in the mountains. The good-natured official also took the opportunity of warning him that this exceptional privilege would probably create some jealousy among the peasant-proprietors, and that he had better engage a trustworthy native guide to accompany him when he

bivouacked in the forest. "He should be a man," said he, "who not only understands the *chasse* and its requirements, but who has a good knowledge of the district, and the character of the inhabitants among whom you hunt. If, when you arrive at Corte, you consult General de Leseleuc, who is a true Breton, and consequently a great *chasseur*, he will probably recommend a man on whom you may rely. The mountaineers," he added, "are, I regret to say, still as ferocious and still as vengeful as in the days of Pascal Paoli; if their jealousy be excited by any supposed injustice or affront, or, worse than all, by any love affair which is likely to invade the sanctity of their family circle, woe betide the offender: they will pursue him like a pack of hell-hounds, and be appeased by nothing less than his life's blood. That jealousy, which is but a demon in an ordinary nature, is a legion of devils when it enters the heart of a Corsican."

It is not only true that conscience makes cowards of us all, but the ghostly monitor will arise and terrify us in behalf of our friends; and, when their fair fame is endangered, will bring a blush to our cheek or a pang to our heart in proportion as they are near and dear to us. Who is there among us who has not cowered under such apprehensions? Yea, there be many

who have called on the hills to cover them in order to escape from so frightful an apparition. The stab inflicted by an indirect thrust is not the less painful on that account ; nor is a trouble less felt because it befalls a friend.

The préfet's earnest manner and words of warning bore, as Pendril believed, an ominous allusion to Temple's case, and seemed to convey more in their import than met the ear. If it had been his object to rescue Pendril and his party from an impending storm he could scarcely have used more emphatic language. So Pendril came to the conclusion, under a sense of bitter mortification, that the préfet knew more of the matter than he did ; that he must have acquired secret information respecting his friend's movements of which he was ignorant ; and that, in all probability, Temple's implication already in this affair was far deeper than his best friend was aware of.

" I regret," said the préfet, observing the effect of his remarks on Pendril's countenance, " that your compatriot is not present to subscribe his signature to the *permis de chasse*, without which the law will not suffer it to be issued. For myself, I have no choice but to retain the document until M. Temple thinks fit to fulfil that requirement. To-morrow morning I leave Ajaccio at break of day for Sartène ;

therefore, if he means to accompany you and take part in the *chasse*, the sooner he attends the better; otherwise the *maitre d'hôtel* will probably enjoy the benefit of his company at Ajaccio for many days to come."

Here was a dilemma for Pendril, who, as the thought flashed across his mind, felt persuaded that Temple had purposely absented himself from the préfecture in order to gain more time for the prosecution of his mad love adventure. It was in vain that Pendril tried to account for his absence from other causes; the truant knew full well his own signature was needed to render the *permis de chasse* complete, and he knew that Pendril and M. Tennyson had made every arrangement for their departure from Ajaccio on the following morning; so, unless some accident had occurred to him, why was he not at his post now in compliance with Pendril's request, and in fulfilment of his own promise to that effect?

In answer to the préfet's inquiry, Pendril could only say that Temple had left the hotel in the morning, and had gone, he supposed, as usual, into the mountains, but in what direction nobody seemed to know; that either he had lost his way in the dense forest of brushwood with which some of the valleys were filled, or he had met with some other unforeseen cause of delay which he (Pendril) could not explain.

"I only hope," said the préfet, "for his own sake, as well as yours, that he has not wandered into one of the ravines south of the Gravone, or he may pay dearly for his intrusion into that quarter. Giovanni de Galofaro hovers like a vulture over that dark gorge, and pounces on his prey without inquiring whether the game be fair or foul; if your friend falls into his claws, deportation at least will be his lot, if not a more summary fate. However, my last accounts of the smuggler were that he had sailed for Carthage, and that his ship, carrying a valuable cargo, was well supplied with necessaries for a longer voyage. Although my douaniers keep a bright lookout on his movements ashore, yet he can baffle a bloodhound in these mountain gorges; and at sea, you may as well try to catch the phantom-ship as this 'son of the whirlpool.' His castle—if a massive one-storied granite building can be so called—looks more like an eagle's nest hanging in the cliffs than the habitation of a human being; and yet the fairest of Eve's fair daughters, Agnese de Galofaro, his only child, and the idol of his soul, occupies in his absence that grim tenement alone. Many a snare set for the father has been discovered by her watchful eye, and many a bullet that would long since have gone to its mark and rid the

island of this desperado, has been turned aside by the influence of her surpassing charms."

While the préfet was proceeding to describe the almost miraculous contrivances by which the captain had so often escaped from the fangs of the law—how, while he slept soundly and securely in his rocky retreat, the fair Agnese, like a ministering angel, watched over his safety through the live-long night—Temple walked into the bureau and brought all further conversation on that subject to an abrupt conclusion.

The clouds which had been gathering on Pendril's brow passed quickly away, and the pleasant greeting of "Just in time, my boy," was the only allusion he made to Temple's tardy arrival. The préfet, however, who certainly had grounds for knowing what Temple's occupation had been for many days past, received him with an air of reserve, as if he had already given that official some trouble, and was destined to give him a great deal more before he quitted the island.

The *permis de chasse* being quickly signed, the document was handed to the owner without further ceremony; and, as he and Pendril took their leave, the préfet, grasping the hand of the latter, remarked significantly that his letter to the military governor might be of use to him, and that he must not forget to deliver it on his arrival at Corte.

The next morning at break of day, being exactly a fortnight after their disembarkation at Ajaccio, the whole party, now increased by the company of M. Tennyson and the black Corporal, marched out of the town *en route* for Bocognano, a small village on the left bank of the Gravone, and just half way between Ajaccio and Corte. Their heavy baggage had already preceded them, and as each man carried his own double gun and breasted the hills in light marching order, they soon gained an elevation of many hundred feet above the level of the sea. Through the *macchie* on either side of the road, consisting of scattered patches of wild myrtle, oleaster, and the *arbutus*, the spaniels were allowed to range with unchecked freedom; and to reward their industry, an occasional covey of red-legs, rattled and pursued through the bush with tremendous excitement, whirred into the air and sought rest in the solitude of some more distant cover: a few of course, as they crossed the line of march, fell to rise no more, leaving, as old Virgil describes it, their lives in the sky; and in the late evening, when the hungry travellers sat down to their otherwise scanty meal at Bocognano, right welcome was the dish of *perdrix-aux-choux* which these luckless birds supplied. The berries of the *arbutus*, on which they had fed, had imparted a

fine flavour to their usually dry and insipid flesh ; and whether it was that simple fact, or their own keen appetite, sharpened by mountain air, that created so high an appreciation of the dish, not even Tennyson himself could tell, though as a Frenchman he was tolerably well versed in such matters.

Although on the main road, and even at so short a distance from Ajaccio, scarcely ten French leagues, Bocognano was nothing less than a mere mountain village, very antique in its character, and with accommodation for strangers rude and simple in the extreme. In the small albergo, for instance, at which our friends halted for the night, two apartments only, and these of very scanty dimensions, could be obtained for their use ; but as they really had a wholesome and clean appearance, little or no objection could be offered to such quarters. The hunters fully understood they were now passing by an easy transition from a state of comparative comfort to one of a far different character ; it was a gentle initiation into the rougher mysteries of forest life. Even the bread of the place was a mixture of chestnut and wheaten flour ; and although it is said to be highly nutritious, yet a certain sweetness in its flavour renders it somewhat unpalatable to persons accustomed to plain

bread. However, on the whole there was no room for grumbling ; the chestnuts, dressed in various ways, were excellent in all ; while the small trout, fresh caught in the mountain stream, proved a delicacy beyond their expectation.

The only incident approaching to a difficulty, during the first night's sojourn, arose from Will's objection to the dogs' quarters : not a door of the outhouse or stable had anything in the shape of a lock upon it, and Will, from long experience, was far too knowing to run any risk with respect to the dogs' safety in a country unknown to him and them. His usual mode of securing them in similar unsafe places was by a strong chain, which, passing between the steel collar and the neck of each dog, was then united at the two end links by a strong padlock ; and thus double-coupled, they could neither stray away nor be stolen by any thief inferior to Cacus himself. But on this occasion the lock and chain had been forwarded with the baggage, and, as Will demurred to a separation for the night from his four-legged friends, they must either come to him or he go to them. M. Tennyson was quite ready to receive Will and the dogs into his dormitory ; " he had often," he said, " slept in worse company ;" but Pendril would not hear of that arrangement, even if the hostess had not already

protested against it. So Will had to go to the dogs, a course which he quaintly told Pendril the parson had predicted for him in very early life. However, in reality, Will preferred the company of Wildfire to M. Tennyson; because, having always been treated with due consideration, he had an instinctive respect for a gentleman, and shrank from the feeling of intruding on his privacy under any circumstances. A wholesome feeling that of Will's, and one which in that day was far more prevalent than it is at present. The decline of this right principle between master and man, that is, of respect on one side and kindly consideration on the other, must eventually tend to the subversion of society. Daily the breach widens under the influence of hauteur, over-refinement, and neglect on this side, and consequently, of estrangement and hatred on the other; for there can be no doubt that as a general rule the corruption of servants is owing to the conduct of the masters. In the present day the very name of gentleman is losing its original signification. "Tell me," said the rector of a country parish lately to a humble member of his congregation, "who was that stranger who entered your pew to-day, I think I ought to know the man?"

"Well, sir, that's Mr. Stone, that lived at

Chiddington, and used to mend your children's shoes; then he broke; afterwards he kept a public-house at Charlton, and then he broke again; and now, sir, he's a gentleman." By which the respondent simply meant to say that Mr. Stone, having no occupation, was now a gentleman.

Every fishwoman in France is now addressed as "madame," a designation which the Bourbon court once held in the highest honour; and in England, the application of "lady" to the fair sex of all classes has become so universal that its omission is really now the exception; it is a middle term so well distributed that its comprehensiveness has no limit. Cheap finery is at the bottom of all this mischief, and cheap finery will be the ruin of the country.

The French tree of fraternity and equality, so long planted in America, has now taken deep root in old England, and, sooner or later, will bring forth a heavy and unwelcome crop of bitter fruit.

Will, as we have already intimated, belonged to a better school: he had been trained in the family of an English country gentleman of the Coverley type, and kindly consideration from his earliest years had impressed him with a sense of deference to, and respect for, his superiors,

which, as we have said, is rarely met with in the present day. The story of the old servant who, being ordered to leave his master's service, declined doing so on the plea that "if his master did not know when he had a good servant, he knew when he had a good master," savours of an age earlier than that of Joe Miller, and indicates the existence of a bond which at least one of the parties was unwilling to sever on account of past indulgence.

The next morning the whole party were soon afoot; and as Corte was to be their headquarters for the chase of the mouflon, they hoped to reach it comfortably before sundown, the distance between it and Bocognano being something less than twenty-five English miles.

After a bountiful breakfast on omelets and other savoury messes, in the concoction of which M. Tennyson took an active part, our friends quitted the albergo, and soon entered into a grand forest of chestnut-trees, which are at once the ornament and the riches of the country. Will, mounted on the Corporal, with Wildfire and Charon at his heels, held steadily to the main road; but the gentlemen, diverging on either side, amused themselves by drawing the rough ground, and getting an occasional shot at small game as the spaniels bustled it out within

reach of their guns. On one occasion, a loud shout from Tennyson, whose practice it was to be wide of his companions, attracted their immediate attention. Will, too, halting in his course as the sound reached him, dashed off to discover the object of the view-halloo (for as such it greeted his ears), and coming up to Tennyson before Pendril and Temple could do so, he found him in a state of wild excitement, but from what cause Will for a few moments was unable to divine.. There he stood under the shade of a huge chestnut-tree, pointing at the butt, and examining sundry deep gashes which had been recently made in the bark of the tree. His ejaculations, uttered in the Breton tongue, impressed Will with the notion that he was holding intercourse with some horrible spirit—some demon of the forest invisible to his eyes; nor were his doubts cleared away till Temple and Pendril, coming to his side, Tennyson turned to them and said, "See, Temple; the furrows in the bark are two feet at least from the ground; what a grand beast he must have been! Steel is not harder, nor have the blades of Toledo a keener edge than the weapon with which he has wounded this tree!"

Of course Temple saw at a glance that a boar was the beast alluded to; although he had never

hunted that wild animal as Pendril had done in the black mountains of Brittany, yet he knew by a kind of instinct which belongs to all true sons of the chase that a boar had been at work, whetting his tusks and preparing them for any deadly encounter in which they might be needed.

"A pig, beyond a doubt," said Temple; "but why not a domestic pig that has strayed away from some peasant's hut in this deep forest?"

"No, no; the season has not yet arrived for that," replied Tennyson; "not a peasant will turn out his pigs till the chestnuts begin to fall; besides, it is the *gros sanglier* alone—the solitaire, the monarch of the forest, that dreads no danger from any beast of the field or jungle, that rips the trees in this fashion."

"He was evidently in no hurry to quit this ground," remarked Pendril, as his eye caught the butt of another tree scored in a similar manner. "I will venture to say he is at no great distance from this neighbourhood, probably in yonder dark ravine. Charon is an old hand at the work; get him on the line, and I'll undertake to say he'll rouse him from his lair however deep it may be in that tangled gorge."

The sagacious hound thus referred to was at that moment feathering on the scent, and in all probability, if he had been encouraged, would have

soon proved the truth of Pendril's words. But time would not permit it; already it was noon, and they had scarcely accomplished one-half of the appointed day's journey. So Charon, just as he was warming on the line, was checked by Will, much against their mutual inclination; and the brave hound as he came to heels, his ears pricked aside, and his tail no longer flourishing over his back, but tucked sulkily in between his hind legs, thus indicated his disappointment as plainly as words could have done it; it was a hark-back to which he gave but an unwilling obedience.

Charon had been bred in Brittany—the land of the wolf and the tusky boar, and had been trained expressly for the chase of these animals by Louis Trevarreg, the famous piqueur of the Comte Charles de St. Prix. Black and tan all over, he stood eight-and-twenty inches high at the shoulder; and although in his work and qualities he resembled the rough old-fashioned stag-hound of Bas Bretagne, yet he bore so strong a resemblance to his Wallachian sire, that Snyders would have been charmed to paint him as a true boar-hound from the banks of the Lower Danube. To the serious business of hunting and forcing a boar from his rocky lair, and even of collaring him under certain circumstances, he added the

lighter but not less useful accomplishment of being a first-rate retriever. No pinioned pheasant falling into a cover stocked to repletion with all sorts of game could escape his nose; and his marvellous capability in recovering wild-fowl, when the waves ran high, the currents strong, and the banks were ice-bound, displayed an amount of power and courage which few retrievers possessed.

But of all his exploits recorded by Pendril, none equalled the fight in the forest of Dualt. A huge wolf of unusual rapacity had long been the terror of the sabôtiers and charcoal-burners in that wild district; he had snatched away the goats bound by a thong from their very door-posts, and had carried off the dogs of the *garde-du-forêt* by daylight before his face. So daring were his depredations, and so marvellous the mode in which he contrived to escape from bullets and traps of all kinds, and even from St. Prix's hounds, that the scared and superstitious peasantry came to the firm belief that the monster was indeed the *Loup-garou*. On several occasions St. Prix, officially invited by the mayor of the commune, had brought his hounds from Morlaix expressly to hunt this scourge of the forest. A large concourse of the Breton noblesse, the true legitimists of France, usually assembled at these

meetings, not so much to do honour to M. de St. Prix as Capitaine de Louveterie, an officer of considerable distinction under the Bourbon kings, nor yet to confer on political subjects, which just then were affecting not only France but the whole civilized world, as to enjoy the sport of wolf-hunting in all its wild grandeur.

The story of the Dualt wolf in connexion with St. Prix's hounds is almost as well known in Brittany as the name of St. Prix itself. As often as they met at Callac and drew the deep cover of Dualt, so often a hound was missing from the pack and was never heard of afterwards. And as it invariably happened that this was the fate of a tail and not a leading hound, the loss was never attributed to the braconniers of that district, who, if they had wanted a hound, would have certainly not stolen the laggard of the pack, but rather the best they could have laid their hands on. At length it was observed by St. Prix that this wolf, which was always found in a particular quarter, ran a long ring before he quitted the cover; and then it occurred to him that the wary brute had overtaken the tail-hound and destroyed him, while the forward pack was engaged in the chase.

This proved to be really the case: the wolf turned round, and, although pursued, became

the pursuer himself, and easily overcame the weakest or the slackest hound of the pack ; then, having wreaked his vengeance, he broke away, as old wolves do break, for a strange country, and so escaped with his life. St. Prix, however, having discovered the stratagem, was at no loss to baffle it by a counterplot. The next time and the last time that wolf was found, he ordered Charon to be coupled up for twenty minutes after the wolf was roused ; then to be slipped and laid upon the line of the forward hounds. In the meantime St. Prix rode ahead, and posting himself at a point just passed by the pack, he awaited with intense anxiety the appearance of Charon, now coming on the foiled scent. He had not been a minute at his post before he viewed the gaunt wolf in the rear of Charon, actually hunting the hound and running in to him with a headlong rush, which the hound, he thought, could hardly withstand. Then came the tug of war : Greek met Greek, silently and fiercely ; and over they rolled fast locked in each other's jaws. Now the wolf was uppermost, and now Charon ; then, as they struggled and reared up together, the wolf seemed a head and shoulders bigger than the swarthy hound. St. Prix could hear the clash of their teeth ; and, as he hurried on with his *couteau-de-chasse* drawn, the com-

batants caught sight of him. Again they rolled over and over; but this time Charon rose from the ground, like Antæus, with renewed vigour, and with a desperate effort seized the wolf's throat. Under that vice-like grip he seemed to stagger and gasp for life. St. Prix was at hand, but the brave hound no longer needed his help; the wolf's eyes were starting from their sockets; his mouth, with its chasm of huge teeth, was wide open; and in another minute the gaunt beast fell motionless and lifeless to the earth. St. Prix's blade was again sheathed in all its burnished brightness; the good hound had done his own work, and there the wolf lay—

Tremendous still in death.

Such is a brief outline of Charon's eventful history: subsequently he was presented by St. Prix to Pendril, as a token of friendship and as a return-gift for a hound called Warrior, which the latter had given to the Capitaine de Lou-veterie, and which became, under the guidance of Louis Trevarreg, one of the best hounds in Brittany for all sorts of rough game.

But to return to the hunters: right loth was Will to check the gallant hound as he lashed his stern and improved on the scent he so dearly

loved. Will would have followed him through the livelong night ; ay, and into the very homestead of the boar, if he had been permitted to do so ; but, as Corte was far up in the mountains and many a league away, neither Tennyson nor Pendril thought it would be prudent to enter on a boar-hunt at so late an hour of the day, and in a wild country unknown to either of them. Temple, however, thought otherwise.

“ I should like to have a brush at the beast,” said he ; “ we may not again cross the fresh traces of so fine an animal. Will says he’ll warrant him three hundredweight by the spread of his hoof in yon clay. We should find him for a certainty ; and after the sport we could easily fall back on Bocognano. Then we might stay a few days longer in that place and draw the rough ground abutting on the beech forests in this neighbourhood.”

“ As our chief object is the mouflon,” said Tennyson, “ by all means let us push on to the ground where that animal is to be found ; our work is all in front, and our game at least two or three thousand feet above us ; to fall back before we have even proved our rifles would certainly be a move in the wrong direction. Besides,” continued he, “ this is the season for the mouflon, but not for the boar : the beech-mast is high, and the chestnut

still in its husk, and until the boar takes in his autumn store, he is scarcely fit food for a vulture."

"By all means let us get forward," chimed in Pendril; "it would indeed be a fool's errand to come thus far on our journey for a specific purpose and then be diverted from it by the track of a stray boar, which by this time is probably in one of the fastnesses of Monte d'Oro. Two to one, Temple, are the odds against you; so forward for the mountains, my boy, and don't imitate the antiquary, whose head and thoughts are retrospective only."

What Temple's real purpose was his friends were at no loss to conjecture; they plainly saw that, at every step which removed him from the valley of the Gravone, Temple was dragging a "lengthening chain" behind him. They had already noticed, with much concern, that the magnificent wild scenery through which they were passing had no charms for him; that neither the dark pine forests, the trees of which towered to the skies, nor the savage grandeur of the mountain-side, arid, verdureless, and desolate as it was at certain points, retained their wonted attractions for Temple's eye. Even the love of wild sport, and the prospect of the chase before him, which for months past had been the subject of his daily thought and nightly dream, was no

longer enjoyed. Another passion far more intense, far more dominant, and utterly regardless of consequences, had swept out the tenement and dwelt there; and the power of seven evil spirits, instead of one, had taken possession of his soul.

Under this influence, which he rather cultivated than resisted, the desertion of his friends was the first thought suggested by a minor spirit; then soon followed the graver counsel of still worse spirits, counsel too dark at present to unfold, and which, if followed, would inevitably bring in its train, misery, ruin, and despair.

Temple made no response to the observations of his friends; but lighting a cigar and shouldering his Lancaster gun, he strode moodily forwards in the direction of Corte. They soon left Vivario behind them, a village overhung by dark forests of the *Pinus altissima*, and notorious for the fierce truculence of its *vendetta* feuds. Hence they caught their first view of the Monte Rotondo, the summit of which seemed to sustain the skies; then crossing the Vecchio, and afterwards the Restonica and Tavignano rivers, they ascended the steep heights by which Corte is approached, and entered the little town as the clock struck six.

CHAPTER IV.

From the bounds of truth careering,
 Man's strong spirit wildly sweeps,
 With each hasty impulse veering,
 Rocked on Passion's troubled deeps.
 BULWER LYTTON'S "SCHILLER."

WHETHER it was the pleasant, smiling, neat-looking hostess that induced our travellers to adopt the Hôtel Paoli as their head-quarters during their stay at Corte, or the high respect they felt for the great patriot's name that figured so conspicuously over the entrance door, it is hardly worth while now to inquire; suffice it to say, Madame Fióre's comely person and trim appearance were true indications of the comfort within. The beds were fresh, the linen white, and the table well supplied, if not with luxuries, at least with excellent food; in fact, the whole *ménage* was unexceptionable. From the isolation of Corte the difficulty of obtaining the mere necessities of life had been so exaggerated at Ajaccio that our friends, fully prepared for the worst, were agreeably surprised to find not only

fair accommodation at the Hôtel Paoli, but ample stores in the town for the supply of all customers.

To call on General de Leseleuc, the military governor of Corte, and to present his letters of introduction, was the first duty to which Pendril devoted himself on the following day. At his particular request, both Temple and M. Tennyson accompanied him to the citadel, while Will sallied forth with the dogs in the direction of the Tavignano, for the purpose, as he said, of giving them a swim in that limpid stream. The citadel overhangs the town, and seems to watch over its safety as an eagle over her brood of young; and the idea of clambering to an eyrie not unfrequently crossed our friends' minds as they mounted the steep street and rugged path leading to its walls. This fortress is veritably founded on a rock, and is said to have been built by Vincentello d'Istria in the fourteenth century. But, whatever may be its early history, it still bears on its battered front the record of hard times and the scars of many a fierce fray. Tales of surpassing interest are told in Corsica of the battles fought on every yard of ground within and without these walls by the patriots on one side and the Genoese on the other. To an ordinary beholder it would appear to be impregnable;

it has, however, been taken and re-taken by slow siege, by storm, and by treachery; but more frequently by the last than by any other means.

As the gentlemen entered the room which the general was accustomed to occupy for the transaction of business, they found him seated at the end of a long table covered with papers, books, and maps, in the examination of which he and several officers seemed at that moment to be fully occupied. Two orderlies stood at the door waiting his commands, while a secretary on his left hand was busily engaged in transcribing a letter, the substance of which the general dictated aloud. "Tell him," said he, before he perceived the entrance of our friends or their cards, which had preceded them, "that he shall have a troop of picked gendarmes for the service, and that if they don't capture Galofaro alive or dead, they shall be tried every man of them by a court-martial."

As he spoke out with much energy and clear enunciation, every word riveted the attention of his visitors before they could advance sufficiently near to apprise him of their immediate presence.

However, in another instant his eye caught Pendril's, and, rapidly scanning him and his companions, he arose at once and saluted them in the most friendly and cordial manner.

"You are welcome," said he, "gentlemen hunters, to the land of the mouflon; and if you carry, as I've no doubt you do, the straight powder for which England is so famous, you will find plenty of sport in these rugged mountains. An express received last night from Monsieur the Préfet of Ajaccio apprises us, among other things, of the object of your visit to Corsica. But I believe you bring an especial letter from my good friend on the subject," he added, pointedly addressing Pendril.

"I have that honour, general," said Pendril, with a respectful bow, as he placed the letter in his hands; but he felt at the same time a little puzzled to account for the readiness with which the general pitched on him as the bearer of the letter. The general, however, did not keep him long in suspense.

"Your identity, Mr. Pendril," said he, "needs no written credentials for me; not only your name, but every feature of your face reminds me of your father so strongly that I can scarcely believe forty years have elapsed since I last enjoyed his boundless hospitality——"

"I am proud to be thought like so good a man, general; but permit me to inquire what fortune brought you into each other's company?"

"The fortune of war, sir; I was a prisoner at Wincanton for five years. Your father was then

a captain in the D—— militia, and guarded us so vigilantly that, whenever he went on short leave to his country house, he generally managed to take one of his prisoners with him—a dangerous experiment for both, it must be owned; nevertheless, many's the happy hour I've spent at Goodwell, hunting, shooting, or fishing every day in the week; but for my country, sir, I could have wished that such captivity had never ceased; and now tell me what can I do to serve my old friend's son?"

Before Pendril could express his thanks or surprise at this unexpected announcement, and before he could find words to confirm the accuracy of the general's slap-dash assumption that Paul Pendril of Goodwell was indeed his father, the general brought the conversation to a close by saying:

"But pray come and dine with me to-day, you and your two friends, punctually at six: I have now a little business, a mere bagatelle, it is true, but it requires immediate attention; when that is arranged I shall have ample time for the enjoyment of your society.

The general's invitation was, of course, tantamount to a command; but the kindly manner in which it was made drew at once from Pendril and Tennyson a prompt and hearty acceptance; Temple, however, bowed his assent with a cold reserve,

which Pendril thought the keen eye of the general could not fail to detect. They then withdrew from the citadel.

In three hours from that time Temple was on the high road for Ajaccio ; and, as Tennyson and Pendril had been for some time conscious that their society was anything but courted by him, they had strolled out together in search of Will, leaving Temple in his room, apparently engaged in letter-writing. The torrent of the Tavignano attracted them irresistibly to its bank ; and, although in tranquil condition, it reminded Pendril not a little of the wild Garry ; it now tumbled along, however, gently humming its summer song, while echo slumbered in the rocks, and the peace of the valley was as yet undisturbed. Pendril could fancy himself hooking a twenty-pound salmon and guiding him, as well as the huge granite boulders would permit, from one pool into another, until after many fierce flings, and many a sharp struggle for life, he kicks himself high and dry upon the sandy shore. While this pleasant picture was presenting itself for a moment to Pendril's imagination, the well-known sound of Charon's note suddenly rung on his ear ; the hound, too, was doubling his tongue and evidently running on moved game.

"What on earth can that mean, Tennyson ?"

said he. "If the old vagabond has got upon a deer it will cost us some trouble to recover him. Let's get on and see what he is about."

A few short notes, however, as if the hound was at mark, soon convinced Pendril it was no deer; so, waiting for Tennyson, who was scrambling after him through the dense scrub and over masses of granite with infinite discomfort to his battered shins, he gave a rattling cheer to the good hound, and then listened with all his ears for his next note. Again, it was a deep short roar, an unmistakable mark; the hound's game was close to his nose, either at bay or at ground. Then, as they cleared a promontory of broken rocks that hung in fantastic and menacing form over the very bed of the river, they could plainly see Charon plunging into a deep pool and striking down stream with all the energy of a hound in chase.

"Have at him, my lad!" shouted Pendril, with as wild and cheering a note as ever was heard on that river. "By St. Hubert, it's an otter, and the old hound is working him bravely. Oh, for six or eight more couples to join chorus! What exquisite harmony we should have in this hollow ravine! But, as that cannot be, let us hasten to the scene of action and see how nobly the old hound can work him single-handed."

So down they hastened towards the river, and there a sight greeted them which; as Pendril said, made his bones shiver with delight. At the very tail of the pool in which Charon was so actively engaged, stood Will in mid-channel, up to his coat-tails in water. No heron ever gazed more intently into the sparkling shallows than Will into the depths of that rushing tide. The otter did not dare to pass him; for every time he attempted to do so Will brandished a long stick, and lunged at him so fiercely that he was glad to turn tail and escape again into the pool above. There Charon took up the running, and by his close pursuit and fiery ardour kept the otter perpetually on the strain. Then, as the bubbles rose and glistened on the surface like a string of pearls, Pendril perceived the animal must land soon or inevitably be drowned. In vain he sought the lowest depths of the Tavignano; in vain the darkest nooks of the granite shore; Charon was hard at him at every turn: the only spot, indeed, in the whole pool, from which the hound could not readily dislodge him, was under the arch of a tiny cascade formed by an overhanging boulder. Behind this transparent screen he managed to keep his head above water and to catch fresh wind; but it was only a short respite; for, ever as the hound discovered him, he dashed

through the spray and drove him headlong into the depths below.

Tennyson was in ecstasies ; he had never yet seen an otter-hunt ; and it was with some difficulty that Pendril dissuaded him from jumping in and joining Will in the shallow. Wildfire and the two spaniels sat motionless on a rock hard by, watching every move in the game, and ready, if the otter landed, to chase and worry him to the death.

" We've been at him for an hour and a half," cried Will to his master ; " and brought him a mile down stream before I could head him in this pool ; and now, sir, he'll beat us after all if you don't get in and keep him away from that fall."

" That's just what I am about to do," shouted Pendril : and suiting the action to the word, he plunged waist-deep into the tide within arm's length of the boiling cascade. The otter, finding that point no longer tenable, landed at once in the very face of his enemy, and sought the jungle in precipitate flight. Now then, Wildfire, the turn you have so patiently waited for has come at last ! and away he goes like a bolt from a cross-bow, head-foremost into the thicket ; and away goes Charon on the line, spaniels and all, in mad pursuit ; such a storm at his heels never yet followed that otter. But the wild cry that

scared the valley was not that of the hounds alone: five or six French soldiers, and as many Corsican peasants, had joined the pack, and raised such a din as might have been heard at High Olympus. Notwithstanding, the otter did not escape; Charon was too steady on his line to be baffled by the hubbub, and, with a terrible purpose, was running for blood. Suddenly, however, the cry ceased, a deadly tussle ensued, and in a few minutes the otter rolled lifeless in the dust. Poor Brush yelped a sad requiem over his remains, he had lost nearly half an ear in the fray; and Wildfire's leg was so wounded, luckily above the knee-joint, that he hobbled about on three legs for the whole of that day.

On their return towards the suburbs of Corte, after this lively and exhilarating bit of sport, Pendril and Tennyson had but one regret, and that was that Temple had not been present to share it. "Had he but seen," said Pendril, "the old hound in the pool, and heard that thrilling note of his every time he fresh-marked the otter, it might possibly have diverted his thoughts, at least for a time, from the all-engrossing passion which now rules him, body and soul."

"It certainly has been a charming divertissement," said Tennyson, "and must have delighted Temple had he been there to see it: but its im-

pression on him would have been as lasting as that of the summer wind on the waving corn."

"At all events he will have a stirring time of it for the next month; the mouflon are shy, and the gorges of Monte Rotondo deep and declivitous; and if he follow the game like a man over that country, the occupation will need his best energy. Reverie is the oil that feeds the fire—the current that keeps the mill going; exclude the supply by active and wholesome work, and you will soon check the flame and bring the machinery to a dead standstill."

As the party approached the Hôtel Paoli, Madame Fiore stood at the threshold, apparently awaiting their return. Bland and profuse were the words of greeting with which the comely hostess received her guests; but Pendril could not help remarking, as she handed him Temple's note, that something had occurred to disturb the usual bright and happy expression of her pleasant face.

"Mr. Temple," she said, "requested me to give you this note, and at the same time informed me his bedchamber would be no longer required. I should grieve to hear that he did not find my house comfortable: he came, as I understood, for a month, and has left in a day; my guests, in general, reverse this proceeding, by coming for a

day and staying a month. It is my pleasure, as well as my interest, to maintain the character of the great name by which my hotel is known ; and this can only be done by making my guests happy."

While the fair hostess was proceeding, with some volubility, to descant on the great and hospitable character of Pascal Paoli, Pendril tore open the envelope, and, with profound surprise and vexation, read the following note :—

"DEAR PENDRIL,—On the old principle that all stratagems are fair in love and war, you will, I am sure, have no objection to endorse my departure with a *bene decessit*. I would gladly have gone to the front with you ; but as I am bound to own, a stronger fancy for game in the rear drags me in an opposite direction. I have little compunction in falling back and deserting the mouflon for sport at present more congenial to my taste.

"If you write to your people, have the goodness not to include my name in the correspondence; for, I need scarcely say, that letters received at Goodwell travel from the Hall to the Rectory, and from the Rectory to the Hall, with telegraphic rapidity. My father's views sometimes clash with mine, and then there's a row ; a result that

usually leads to homilies and other less convenient inflictions.

"If any letters arrive for me, pray forward them to the hotel at Ajaccio, from which point I hope to join you on your return to England. Commend me to Tennyson, and say all that is proper to the general on my account: he really seems one of whom it might be said, *Janua patet, cor magis*.

"Ever yours,

"GODFREY TEMPLE."

"Poor fellow!" cried Pendril, gravely, as he folded up the cool note; "this is a sad step indeed! Would that my influence had been more successful, and his temptation less potent! Passion, however, has prevailed over reason, and trampled out the spark of light in his better nature,—a tyrant as inexorable as Pluto, and cruel as the vulture that fed on the vitals of Prometheus. Can nothing be done to rescue him from this impending evil? I'll consult the general; and what cannot be effected by my counsel, may be controlled by his power."

So, strong in his resolve, he turned to the fair hostess, over whose brow the cloud of disappointment was still hanging, and expressed a cheering hope that it would not be long ere Temple was

back again in his comfortable quarters at the Hôtel Paoli; a reassurance which soon brought out the sunny smile on her bright face again.

While Pendril and Tennyson were engaged in dressing themselves for dinner, Will was amusing himself and a large party of admiring peasants by stripping off the otter's skin, which he managed to do in the most adroit manner. The animal hung in an open doorway, by a strong hook firmly fixed into the inside of his upper jaw. With the aid of a sharp knife, the lips first, and then the skin of the head, were inverted and drawn back, until the whole body, up to the very tip of the tail, passed through the mouth; by which process, as Will demonstrated, the valuable skin was obtained "as sound as a new glove." Poor Brush, too, no longer of merry mood, but apparently anticipating with downcast looks the fate that awaited him, was coupled up to a post to undergo a sharp operation at Will's hands. After carefully rounding off the jagged edge of the dog's ear with sharp scissors, Will's tender mercies had well-nigh mastered him, as he proceeded to apply the cruel red-hot iron to the bleeding wound. However, it was soon done; and then remembering that, under the frizzled and hard cicatrix formed by the actual cautery, the ear would thenceforth be case-hardened against gan-

grene and thorns, Will's conscience was quickly reconciled to the severe but useful operation. As to Wildfire's wound, it was wisely left to the sole care of his own tongue, which, by its cleansing and therapeutic power, soon effected a perfect cure. "The dog wants no doctor," said Will, "if he can only reach the wound with his own tongue;" and then he proceeded to moralize, and to draw between the hound's tongue and that of the human being a comparison by no means flattering to the latter. "St. Paul was quite right when he called it an 'unruly member:' even a dog's will heal a sore; but the too frequent use of a man's tongue is to rip it up."

Before we follow Temple to the banks of the Gravone, and reveal the delirium of love which led him in a state of moral blindness to the very brink of a precipice, let us accompany our two friends to the general's private residence, and bear testimony to the cordial welcome they received from their gallant and genial host. He regretted, he said, Temple's sudden departure for Ajaccio (Pendril had assigned no reason for it), but hoped soon to see him again at Corte.

General de Leseleuc was not only a commander of high reputation in the French army, but had gained, by his courteous bearing and

straightforward policy in diplomatic service, the respect and esteem of many a foreign potentate. At that very time he was expecting, and soon after received, the highest military honour which his king could confer on him, namely, that of a Marshal's bâton. A perfect blaze of orders, among which those of his own country were not the least conspicuous, decorated the veteran's breast as he sat at the head of his table, and did its honours with the ease, suavity, and dignity of a thorough gentleman.

The banquet, consisting of a great variety of dishes, the names of which are scarcely to be found by a reference even to Véfour's carte or that of the Trois Frères, boasted of one, however, a *pièce de résistance*, to which the general invited his guests' particular attention. This was nothing more nor less than a glorious haunch of mouflon venison, roasted à *merveille*, and served up with a delicate sweet sauce, indicating the highest flight of culinary art.

"That mouflon," said the general, "was killed by my piqueur, after a chase which lasted two days, in the forest of Asco. A wild thyme of peculiar sweetness grows on the porphyry cliffs of Monte Cinto, and imparts a fine flavour to the mouflon of that district. In the absence of roast beef and Southdown mutton," continued

he, jokingly, "you, M. Pendril, may find a fair substitute in our wild mouflon ; so pray let me help you."

Pendril's appreciation of a substantial dish was equal to that of his countrymen in general ; and he frequently maintained that a handsome, well-fed joint, smoking on the board, and suggesting a land of plenty, gratified the eye and the anticipation almost as much as the palate itself. Besides, he rather liked to know what food he was eating, a point of information not always attainable when an Englishman dines on the wrong side of his herring-pool ; so he readily exchanged his empty plate for that proffered by the general.

"Worthy of the gods, general ! The Hampshire downs never fed mutton equal to this ; in fact, it resembles in flavour the Castlehill venison, but is far superior even to it in the juicy and fine quality of its fibre."

"We always dignify it," replied the general, "with the title of venison, inasmuch as it is the meat of a wild animal, bearing a far stronger affinity in habits, if not in appearance, to the chamois and red-deer, than to any breed of sheep known."

"The argali of the Caucasus is own brother to the mouflon," said Tennyson ; "but, strange

to say, the Cossacks and Calmucks have the bad taste to despise the meat of that mountain sheep, and to value it for its skin and fleece alone: indeed, the carcase of their domestic sheep is rarely eaten, and is usually considered by them as unfit for human food."

"The same in Spain," said General de Leseleuc. "Your grandee would as soon dine on a boiled donkey, or a raw sausage, as on one of his own choice merinos; and even the poorest Spaniard prefers a dinner of herbs, stewed in oil, to the best mutton that his land produces."

"The weight of this haunch must have been at least twenty-eight pounds before it was cooked," remarked Pendril; "a good size for that of a well-fed fallow-deer. Have you any notion of the animal's age, general?"

"He must have been more than four years old, by his full mouth; but to judge by the rings at the base of his magnificent horns, I believe him to have been at least six or seven."

Then the conversation fell on the best district for hunting the mouflon. An officer present, Captain de Grenier, who as yet, according to the general, had earned far more glory on the mountain-top than in the military camp, pronounced strongly in favour of the forests south of Monte Rotondo, in the gorges of which

might be found the oldest and the fattest mouflon of the island. "Besides," added he, "by going into that district you penetrate the chain of mountains known by the names of Punta della Cappella, Monte d'Oro, and dell' Incudine, the most inaccessible and the least disturbed ground frequented by the mouflon."

"A grand, wild country certainly, and abounding with game," replied the general; "but how can you carry on a campaign, which is no child's play, at such a distance from your base? The peasant's lone cot, or the yet more miserable hut of the goatherd, are the sole tenements of man in that desolate region; and they, you need scarcely be told, are utterly insufficient for even your necessary wants and accommodation. I quite understand your intention of roughing it; but after labour—and such labour as yours will be—you must have rest and good food, or the mouflon will soon be the victors. Four bare walls, with a single aperture to let you and the light in, and the smoke out, will try your mettle, gentlemen; and as for the fare, chiefly a coarse chestnut bread, and a sup of goat's milk, it would puzzle an Esquimaux and his dog to subsist on it after a hard day's chase."

"We have enlisted Madame Fióre's good services in our behalf," said Pendril; "she has

undertaken to send daily provisions to any given spot within ten leagues of Corte. Then we carry a small tent with us, which, so far as it goes, will serve us for rest and shelter."

"But one tent is not sufficient," observed the general; "you must take a second of larger dimensions; you shall have one of mine which has a curtain-partition and two tressle-beds in it: this will at least afford you and M. Tennyson clean quarters, and, by bringing you together, will probably protect you against the intrusion of a couple of brigands who have long infested that district."

"A thousand thanks, general; it would be a home in the wilderness for us; but how can so spacious a tent with its paraphernalia be conveyed to a region so rugged, and devoid, as you say, of everything in the shape of a road, except a mere bridle-path?"

"Easily enough, on the back of one of our ambulance horses. Leave that to me; I'll undertake to send it to any point reached by Madame Fióre's provisions. Then, you shall have my piqueur, a mouflon-hunter from his birth. There is not a brooklet that tumbles into the Tavignano or the Restonica, which old Piero has not traversed to its source; so you can depend on his knowledge of the country, and,

PAUL PENDRIL.

what is of still greater use, his knowledge wild animals' habits, as well."

"He will be a great acquisition, general, I feel sure; still I scarcely like to accept your kind offer, lest I should deprive you of my services."

"Oh, never mind that; if I take the post which I hope to do some day in your company, I will adopt De Grenier in the double capacity of piqueur and aide-de-camp: what say you, captain?"

"That I should like to live and die in your service; the camp in the forest has far more charms for me than the dull routine of a garrison life."

"Fulfil your duty, De Grenier, to the best of your ability, whatever that duty may be; then, depend upon it, your enjoyment will be either in the forest or elsewhere, will be increased a thousandfold."

As no one seemed disposed to question the soundness of the general's doctrine, I doubt for one moment that he had practised himself in all its comprehensiveness, De Camille again drew Pendril's attention to the valley lying south of Monte Rotondo, the numerous torrents of which feed the foaming Restonica, and pointed out the advantage of the narrow

over those of a wider character; and from the minute manner in which he entered into details respecting the nature of the country and the mode of pursuit best calculated to insure success, it was evident he had devoted no little time and observation to the engrossing subject.

Pendril and Tennyson, therefore, were by no means slack in booking the hints which this keen forester so readily bestowed on them; and when he had unfolded a small pocket map of the district, and marked out certain central points around which they were recommended to revolve, he handed the map to Pendril, and begged his acceptance of it as a small token of regard from a brother hunter. A more useful gift could scarcely have been made, for as it was a transcript from the government military map reduced by De Grenier's own hands, its accuracy was complete. The chase of the mouflon in these mountains, thought Pendril, must be no mean training for the sterner duties of a soldier's life. And if his profession call him to hunt the wild Kabyl in the gorges of the Atlas range, who so likely to distinguish himself in the fierce pursuit and deadly encounter, who to detect and circumvent the panther-like approach of the wily savage, as the man whose powers of mind and body have been already invigorated and

sharpened by the severe but welcome lesson taught by the mountain chase?

The great Duke of Wellington was wont to say that the hunting-field was a fine school for a soldier; Sir Hussey Vivian was a notable example; and the name of General Graham, who at forty years of age first adopted the military profession, and whose conduct in the Peninsula afterwards shed so glorious a lustre on the victories of the British armies, was another of the many instances to which he alluded in confirmation of that opinion. An ardent sportsman from his youth, General Graham had acquired his tactics on the mountain-side; and so well had he studied the game of "mimic war," on his own wild hills, before he engaged in that of giants in a foreign land, that Napier, speaking of the battle of Barossa, pays the following tribute to his character as a general in these glowing words: "The contemptible feebleness of Lapena furnished a surprising contrast to the heroic vigour of Graham, whose attack was an inspiration rather than a resolution,—so wise, so sudden was the decision,—so swift, so conclusive was the execution."

The merits of the forests situated on the west side of Corte were then freely discussed; but the sources of the Golo in the region of Monte

Tavolato seemed to be so little known by the majority of the officers present that the general strongly recommended our friends to adopt De Grenier's plan, and to bivouac in the valleys lying on the right bank of the Restonica. Accordingly it was finally arranged that on the following morning the expedition should start, under Piero's escort, up the gorge of that river; that "the Corporal" bearing the smaller tent, and a mule the larger one provided by the General, should be accompanied by Madame Fiore's provisions and ascend to the very outskirts of the highest beechen forest.

In deference, perhaps, to English habits, the pleasant little dinner-party did not break up with the usual post-prandial despatch, but sat on to a late hour, the General and Pendril chatting of old times at Goodwell and of days with Newton Fellowes, John Warde, and Farquharson; when the countries of those heroes of the chase were enlivened by the spirits of such men as Billy Butler, Yeatman, Harry Biggs, and young John Russell, the last even then distinguished for his superior knowledge in all matters relating to sylvan craft.

Tennyson, on the other hand, was looking to the future, being attentively employed in listening to the stirring tales of the forest which De

Grenier recounted, and in gleaning from them such local information as might be useful to the hunting party. When the "good-night" at length came, De Grenier in an audible whisper, intended for the ears of the general, expressed his belief to the parting guests that in all probability he should drop in upon them before many days were past.

The general, however, thought otherwise, and put an extinguisher at once upon that hope: "To-morrow," said he, "Captain de Grenier goes on special service to the Gravone, by which duty he will gain more profit, though perhaps less glory, than in pursuit of the wild moufflon." There was a dash of sarcasm unusual to the general in that last observation; but it really referred to the *service* in which De Grenier was to be employed, and not to any doubt as to the readiness and ability of that officer to undertake and execute any order entrusted to him by his general. In reality, De Grenier was an especial favourite of his; the old feeling of "*simile simili gaudet*" influenced his heart; and no one knew better than he did, that, if De Grenier were required to head a charge, or storm a breach in the very teeth of the enemy, it would be done with a chivalrous intrepidity worthy of the days of ancient Sparta. Still his

devotion to the chase exceeded all other considerations ; and, although the ordinary duties of his military profession were never left unfulfilled, yet was he prone to regard them as a kind of collar-work from which it was unmanly to flinch, or even as a penance imposed on him for the unbounded licence he took in the enjoyment of the chase, to which he gave his whole soul. The general thought it prudent, now and then, to put on the drag, and to restrain the impetuosity of his aide-de-camp's temper by special service, the nature of which might or might not be in strict accordance with that code which regulated the duties of a French soldier. On this occasion it certainly was a wide departure from it. But beside the salutary check on De Grenier, who, like many a man, was a poor judge of his own pace, the general had other good reasons for appointing him to a command which required hardihood, quickness of thought, and the activity of a mountain-cat.

De Grenier was the very man for the post ; but it can scarcely be said he was flattered by the confidence with which, in this case, the general seemed disposed to honour him ; no, he rather winced at the idea of being turned into a detective, and sent to capture a mere smuggler and his cut-throat crew. If his prey was to be man, he had no objection to a

regular campaign ; but to track and waylay a buccaneer, a pirate at sea and a bandit ashore, such as Galofaro was known to be, he could not reconcile that service with his own notions of military duty. His proud spirit chafed at the appointment ; better a thousand times be summoned to a wolf-hunt by the maire of one's commune, thought he, than be sent at the request of a cursed préfet on such a mission as this. And afterwards, doubly bitter was the draught proffered to his lips as, on his pillow, his fancy pictured the pleasant expedition now about to start in pursuit of forest game ; he saw a noble-headed mouflon standing aloft on guard, and watching over the safety of a little herd that fed securely in the gorge below ; and he saw, in his rear, Pendril on his hands and knees, winding up to him like a red Indian through the tufts of grass and blocks of granite that lay between him and his prey ; then, how far his imagination might have carried him it is hard to say ; but at that point the sharp rattle of a kettle-drum roused him from his light slumber to the real business of the day ; and in another hour he and a small troop of horsemen, lightly accoutred, swung into their saddles, and were off for the Gravone.

CHAPTER V.

Love in my bosom, like a bee,
 Doth suck his sweet ;
 Now with his wings he plays with me,
 Now with his feet.
 Within mine eyes he makes his nest,
 His bed amidst my tender breast ;
 My kisses are his daily feast,
 And yet he robs me of my rest :

Ah ! wanton, will ye ?

ROSALIND'S MADRIGAL.

THE clanking of the steel scabbards had scarcely ceased in the steep streets of Corte, when Pendril and his party, now reinforced by old Piero and the two men in charge of the tent and provisions, marched out of the town, and, following the main road, soon reached the torrent of the Restonica. Before we accompany our friends, however, up the rugged ravine through which that river tumbles from rock to rock in a continuous silver cascade ; or bring them through forests of mighty pine to the region of utter solitude in which the mouflon is found, it will be necessary to take a retrospect of Temple's proceedings before he and his friends had quitted the town of Ajaccio.

The day after their arrival at that port, Temple, as he sauntered along in a fashion very peculiar to himself, paused a while in front of a fruit-stall, on which were piled chestnuts, figs, pomegranates, and a quantity of prodigious water-melons. A Corsican maiden stood near, bearing on her head a small basket into which she adroitly popped the pomegranates as she selected them, and a few flowers from the stall before her. The fruiterer, a young, handsome man, and apparently a Moor, seemed anxious to assist his fair customer in the arrangement of the fruit; but with a merry ringing laugh she warned him to keep at arm's length, and not touch her basket. The fruit, so fair and so tempting, might have been gathered in the garden of the Hesperides; but Temple saw it not; his eyes were feasting on a form the like of which would have disturbed even the judgment of Paris.

The *pose* of the girl, as she lingered at the stall, was precisely that of Titian's daughter, as she is painted bright and exuberant under her fair burden of fruit and flowers. Simply and scantily draped in the native costume, her attire consisted chiefly of a mandile and an Indian-silk faldetta, the last encircling her low brow in jaunty fashion, and restraining a mass of jet-black hair within its proper limits; the other,

by its light and airy texture, betrayed her faultless symmetry, and served to heighten the charms it would fain conceal.

Her figure, above the common height, was lithe and graceful, yet charmingly developed; her head and delicate outline of features such as Praxiteles would have chosen for a model of pure Grecian beauty; and yet her full dark eyes, so intermittent in expression, one moment flashing fire, the next sleeping lazily under their long-fringed canopy, betokened the presence of Moorish blood coursing fitfully in her veins. Then, her foot and ankle were matchless—worthy of Andalusia in its old bolero days. And her leg—shall I go on?—yes, Burns shall describe it:—

Down flowed her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen,
And such a leg!—my bonnie Jean
 Could only peer it;
Sae straight, sae taper, tight and clean,
 Nane else came near it.

Such, in outward form, was Agnese de Galofaro, the daughter of the dread smuggler, on whom Temple now gazed as though she were an angel fresh from the skies.

Although the vendor seemed to be far more earnestly employed in recommending himself than his fruit, and in paying compliments which were apparently taken for as much as they were

worth, the time occupied in the purchase of his goods did not exceed a few minutes. Yet, brief as that space was, it sufficed to set Temple's blood boiling, and to leave marks of a hot burning brand on him, deep and ineffaceable as that of Cain, for the rest of his life.

"Agnese," said the fruiterer, extending a beautiful little bouquet of red geraniums and orange-blossoms, "accept this offering; they are blossoms now, but when your eyes shine upon them they will soon become exquisite flowers;" and the Moor bent forward with the intention of placing them in her bosom. A flash of the eye, however, like summer lightning, bade him beware that she was not to be trifled with; and as she stepped back to avoid his attentions the bouquet fell to the ground. It was an ill omen; and the Moor thought it so, for suddenly the light of hope seemed to fade on his face, his brow lowered, his eyes became dull and beady, and disappointment took possession of his soul. He picked up the bouquet, however, and replaced it on the stall.

Temple, whose near approach had been hitherto unnoticed either by Agnese, intent on her purchase, or by the fruiterer, devoted to his fair customer, now interposed, a *Deus ex machinâ* :—

"I hardly know which to admire most, your

fruit or your flowers; what is the price of that bouquet?" said he, pointing carelessly to the rejected one.

By this time Agnese had departed, leaving the field open to the new customer.

"That," said the Moor, with a rueful countenance, "is now of no value; the others are seventy-five cents each."

"I'll take four," said Temple; and, as he handed out three francs, the spirit of the Moor seemed to revive; and in ten minutes, under the influence of his commercial success and Temple's talk, Richard was himself again.

"The girl is lovely as a houri; but her paradise is inhabited by the devil himself," said he.

A queer tenant, thought Temple, as he waited for further explanation.

"Yes; her father, Galofaro—the Son of the Whirlpool, as he is called—is a fiend in human form; he has cut more throats and scuttled more ships than ever Charybdis swallowed; and yet he was a fair merchant and good neighbour before a Riff captain carried away in his absence his beautiful wife, the mother of that girl. However, he had his revenge; he caught him in the Bay of Mahon, took him to sea, and then roasted him alive; and, if his crew are to be believed, they all feasted on him afterwards.

As Galofaro boarded the Riff felucca on her port side, his wife went down in a sack on the starboard quarter; and from that day Galofaro has acknowledged no law, human or divine."

"But how does he escape punishment," inquired Temple, "if he is so desperate a character?"

"By his own strong arm and sharp cutlass; and if they are insufficient, the subtlety of the old snake comes to his aid. At present he is at sea, or that girl would not be at Ajaccio, that's certain. While ashore, and at rest in his lonely fort, he depends on her eye alone for safety, and that has never failed him yet; nor has the cushat dove a quicker ear."

"But this fort," inquired Temple, with a design which he could ill conceal, "what is its position, and who are its occupants in Galofaro's absence?"

"Grotta-dell'-Orco, as it is now called, is more cave than castle. Nature has been the chief architect, though man has done much to render the place all but impregnable. The only approach to it is by a narrow path hewn out of the cliff's side; and to climb it in safety you need the claws of a mountain cat and the head of a jackdaw. The gorge in which it stands lies south of the Gravone, and is perhaps the wildest and roughest in all Corsica; it is

just a three hours' walk from the city. A Greek woman, related, they say, to her beautiful mother, is Agnese's sole companion; but she is dumb, her tongue having been cut out by the Riff pirates when they carried off Galofaro's wife."

"Monsters!" muttered Temple, who, to divert the Moor's thoughts from the real object of his inquiry, craftily enlarged on the barbarities practised by the Berber race on captives in general, but especially on those who were Christians. He then took his departure.

Temple had now gleaned quite sufficient information to enable him to trace Agnese to her mountain home; accordingly, so soon as breakfast was over on the following day, leaving Pendril and Tennyson still sipping their café noir, he uncoupled Wildfire, lighted his pipe, and was off for the Val-dell'-Orco without further delay. At a distance of at least three leagues from the city as he entered a gorge, down which a tiny stream babbled its wild song and then mingled its waters with the rapid Gravone, the scene of rugged desolation that met his view impressed Temple with a sense of awe which he could ill define. It seemed as if the earth had been rent asunder by some tremendous volcanic action, and its innermost bowels exposed in their crude and naked deformity to the light of day.

Rightly had it been named, in Homeric phrase, the "Gates of Hell." The dark groves of pine and ilex at its entrance; farther on, the absence of all vegetation, the aridity of the soil, the fragments of rock upheaved and scattered in every direction, the masses of grey cliff that rose tier above tier until they were lost to the eye, gave so gloomy an appearance to the whole scene that Temple did not wonder at the superstitious awe with which this glen was regarded by the Corsican peasants. He felt convinced also that he now stood,

Vestibulum ante ipsum, primisque in faucibus Orci,

that is, in the very jaws of that valley which, without the Sybil's branch to protect him, he had so rashly determined to visit. Had Grief and avenging Care, pale Disease and sad Old Age,—had Fear, Famine, and Want met him at its portals, "*terribiles visu formæ*,"—their presence would scarcely have increased the gloomy horrors of that scene. The black Cocytus, with its torpid water, was indeed wanting to complete the picture, for the dancing little rivulet was pellucid as the rock crystal that guards the shrivelled body of San Carlo at Milan.

In the very centre of this desolation, Temple chose for his resting-place the summit of a mighty boulder that occupied the bed of the brook, and

gave him a commanding view of the sterile ravine, on either side. From this point, with a patience characteristic of the tender passion in its first stage, he swept the gorge with his Ross-glass steadily and minutely for hours together. Not Charles St. John, when he stalked the muckle hart of Benmore, carried a keener eye than Temple on this occasion. But nothing of life appeared within range of his vision ; nothing save a dreary old eagle, that sailed to and fro through the cloudless sky, as if he, too, was on the look-out for some luckless quarry doomed to be his prey. Not even the faintest trace of a footpath was visible on either side of the gorge, or he would have followed it to its farthest end, in spite of all difficulties.

So, as the day advanced, and Temple's eye was well nigh weary of its fruitless work, a suspicion crossed his mind that the Moor had divined the real object of his inquiries, and had purposely put him on a wrong scent ; but, at the same time, he felt sure that this was none other than the Val-dell'-Orco, which the fruiterer had so well described. Again and again he rose to stretch himself on the elevated but narrow perch he had chosen for his watchtower ; and ever, as the thought of giving up the search occurred to him, the rare beauty of Agnese interposed and chained him to the spot again. At length, in taking a

long steady view at the almost perpendicular cliff in front of him, the same dreary eagle once more crossed his vision ; but this time it bore in its talons some living burden, and, carrying it across the glen, alighted with it on a plateau within two hundred yards of the rock on which Temple stood.

Instantly the unearthly screams of a woman, apparently in distress, burst upon his ear. Guided by the sound, his eye caught sight of a figure descending a dizzy footpath at a frightful pace. One false step would have been her last in life ; but she held on, dashed over the brook, and breasted the hill with a lightness of foot that even Camilla might have envied. Wildly she waved her handkerchief in the air and redoubled her cries, evidently with the hope of scaring the eagle from his prey. But the royal bird had waited too long for his dinner to be so easily disturbed, and bore it steadily and securely to the plateau already described.

Temple knew the figure at a glance, and seized the opportunity. He shut up his glass deliberately, descended the rock, and joined at once in the chase.

Strong and agile as a stag, a few hearty bounds over stock and stone soon brought him to the table-rock on which the eagle had perched ; and so suddenly did he execute this movement, that

the fierce bird had scarcely time to relinquish his hold and take to flight, before Temple's crab-stick came whizzing through the air and fell within a few yards of his intended victim. This was a poor little white kid, which, as Temple raised it tenderly in his arms, bleated faintly, but seemed to be more frightened than injured by its aërial trip and the rough usage to which it had been subjected. A few seconds more, and Agnese de Galofaro stood again by his side, her eye and nostril dilated, and her bosom heaving and undulating like the sea in a ground-swell. Warm and grateful were her expressions as she thanked Temple for his well-timed and ready help; then as she gently caressed the poor kid, which still lay nestled in his arms, she told him in a few words its simple history:—

"Its mother," said she, "nourished me in my childhood, and was my sole playmate for many a year; but when this kid was born, my old companion fell sick and died; so I try to take poor old Lusie's place, and supply it, as well as I can, with maternal care and affection. But that ruthless bird (she little knew what Temple's thoughts were at that moment) would have robbed me of my sweet pet, and my heart would have been desolate indeed."

Agnese, as she spoke, continued stroking the

kid's head and ears, all the while talking to it in soft musical tones, with which it seemed quite familiar and quite happy. The girl was nature's own child; and so strong was the innocence of Eve impressed upon her, that Temple must have been less than human not to have felt its influence, and wicked as Satan to have plotted against it. And yet, as her heart beat almost against his, and her breath played on his cheek, it would have been strange indeed if he had not borrowed one leaf out of the old Tempter's book; strange if, susceptible as he was, he had been able to subdue, sensations which were setting his hot blood on fire. Temple was so like the rest of the world, that he did what others, under like circumstances, have so often and so successfully done before him, even from the beginning—he beguiled the woman with his tongue; and he did it with a subtlety not altogether unworthy of the father of lies.

“I must carry it there for you,” said he, as Agnese extended her arms and expressed a wish to bear the kid homewards.

“Impossible,” said the girl, firmly. “I dare not admit you. My father is at sea; and, except by his orders, no human being is permitted to cross our threshold save Zara and myself.”

“At least I should like to hear how the little

aëronaut thrives after his adventurous journey," replied he; and, as he handed the kid over to its mistress, he expressed so deep an interest in its welfare that Agnese, unsuspecting of any ulterior design, at once said—

"Oh, *that* you may know readily, when you are disposed to visit the well at the foot of this hill. I usually go there at mid-day for our daily supply of water,—for the brook, though so bright and clear, is not always to be trusted."

Temple made no hasty response; but his handsome features could ill conceal the satisfaction he felt at this information, and he chuckled within himself at the unwariness of the game he was about to pursue. Then, there was a soft, purring gentleness of manner about him, when he addressed a woman that was perfectly irresistible: and his own self-confidence told him that, if not already preoccupied, a few private interviews would place this simple girl helplessly in his power.

"We shall meet soon at the well, then," said he, somewhat carelessly, but mentally resolving to be there on the morrow, and there every day during his stay at Ajaccio. Having then helped her and the kid across the torrent—an act of assistance which Agnese little needed,—he turned from the Val-dell'-Orco and left for the city.

That night the image of the handsome stranger haunted the dreams of poor Agnese. Again she fancied herself in wild pursuit of the eagle, and, close to her, Temple came bounding over the rocks, with a light step and a radiant face: then the scene changed, and she saw a deadly struggle taking place between her father and him; and before she could interfere, Galofaro had driven his dagger into Temple's heart. So deeply was her mind impressed with the reality of this vision (for in sleep imagination wanders at full swing, uncontrolled by reason), that she awoke with a cold shudder, and it was a long time before her pulse settled down to its accustomed beat. Like the first touch of frost on a delicate plant, the fret-work disappears before the morning sun, but its cold finger is long felt by the flower.

Alas! those meetings at the well, to one of which Pendril had become an accidental witness, soon led to others in more private and secluded spots, and at length to the Grotta itself. Neither the difficulties of the steep and dangerous ascent, nor the warnings of Zara, nor even the daily expected arrival of Giovanni de Galofaro were allowed to interfere for one instant with Temple's visits, which became more and more prolonged as the time drew near for his departure.

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The infatuation of Agnese, too, as might be expected from the passion that peeped out at her eyes, was now, if possible, more heedless of results than even that of the reckless Temple. Poor child ! she had never been taught to subdue nature, nor to check its aspirations. Love to her was like the mountain torrent, flushed with rain, rushing madly forward and laughing at restraint. She indeed might have said with Eloise :—

Oh ! happy state ! when souls each other draw—
When love is liberty, and nature law.

To lie on his breast for hours together ; to “ drink delicious poison ” from his eye ; to pant on his lip as he pressed her closer and closer yet to his throbbing heart ; to interchange thoughts too deep and too sacred for mortal words to tell, created so wild a tumult in her veins that, even if she had striven to gain a command over herself, she could no more have done so than a pilot could guide a rudderless ship in a stormy sea. Is it to be wondered at that so inflammable a temperament caught fire under such circumstances ? or that, when Temple, seated beside her, his arm fondly clasping her waist and his tongue lisping the language of eternal love and tenderness, she resigned to him her guileless heart ? Ay, and she did so with

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a pure, unquestioning, confiding faith worthy of a holier cause and a better fate—"Hic Hymenæus erit:" she accepted his vows as already fulfilled, and believed in him with her whole soul.

The very gods conspired against poor Dido, and forced her with thunder and hail into the open arms of Æneas: the Massylian knights, however, were evidently shocked at the public indiscretions of their fair queen; and immediately that monster Fame blew her brazen horn and magnified the scandal throughout the cities of Libya.

But in the Val-dell'-Orco, the dark pine forest at its foot was all but impervious to human eye; and no tongue was present to whisper light tales of the youthful pair. The summer wind that sighed in the trees, and the song of the tinkling brook, were the only sounds heard in that silent grove; so Temple and Agnese wandered in its mazes, enjoying the bliss of the moment, but heedless of the passing time and of the day of reckoning.

The douaniers of Ajaccio had indeed reported at head-quarters the constant visits of Temple to the Grotta; but as it was acutely inferred that the violation of the Code Napoleon was not his object, the officers were commanded not to extend their espionage to the private business of the young Englishman.

Nothing, however, escaped the watchfulness of Zara's eyes; and, as might be expected, the endearments that passed between the pair in their most private interviews were no secret to her. On the day before Temple and his friends took their departure for Corte, Agnese became aware that Zara was in a state of utter terror lest Galofaro should make his appearance before Temple had fairly started on his hunting expedition and turned his back on the Val-dell'-Orco. Not one of his crew understood the desperate character of Galofaro better than Zara did: she knew that revenge, always sweet to the Corsican, was intensely so to him; and she dreaded to witness the result of it. In fact, she would have walked into the crater of a volcano rather than face Galofaro if she allowed him to find Temple in possession of Agnese,—Agnese, the living image of her mother, and the only object in life for which the smuggler now cared to live. The man who would despoil him of that jewel, or sully its brightness, must indeed be indifferent to his own safety or ignorant of Galofaro's nature.

So Zara, to pacify her conscience, or to prevent the realization of her fears, warned Agnese of the extreme risk which Temple ran if Galofaro found him near the Grotta. She drew her forefinger significantly and ominously across her

throat, first pointing at Temple and then at her own self, implying by the last action that she had been equally to blame in having so far acquiesced in Temple's visits.

Still, however, Agnese, loth to lose him as he was loth to depart, stood with her hand locked in his at the mouth of the lion's den.

"In a week or two," he whispered in her ear, "I shall be with you again; and then, if your father consents, we can make arrangements for our marriage without delay."

So relying on this promise—the Jack-o' Lantern of many a confiding maid—Agnese sobbed as if her heart would break; and when Temple turned to go, the language if not the very words of Ruth burst from her lips: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

But Zara, laying a firm hand on her wrist as Temple left, pointed seawards, and with a gesture too significant to be mistaken, drew her attention to a *barca* in the offing. Instead of the latine sails, however, under which the felucca usually sailed, this craft carried a kind of lugger-rig; but the long, low hull, and the course she held, did not deceive Zara's eyes; she knew her to be the "Morgana."

There was just wind enough to give her steerage way, consequently it would be many hours before her crew could come ashore ; the landing, too, would be effected in the dead of night, if the coast were clear ; and then Temple would be safe at Ajaccio.

On the following day, as we know, Temple and his friends started early for Corte ; and that very night Galofaro slept in the Val-dell'Orco.

CHAPTER VI.

Forth the hunter bounds unheeding,
 On his hardy footsteps press ;
 Hot and eager, blindly speeding
 To the mountain's last recess ;
 Swift before him, as the wind,
 Panting, trembling, flies the hind.

SCHILLER.

THE glorious scenery through which Pendril and his party journeyed on their way to the Val-Verdi is equal in its rugged and wild features, if not in grandeur, to any country in Europe. Rocks, ravines, torrents, mountains, the tops of which were covered with perpetual snow, and the sides furrowed with winter storms, were presented to their view, under a new aspect, at each successive step. Ben Nevis, the highest mountain of Great Britain, is a pigmy in stature compared with some of the mountains of Corsica. Placed by the side of Monte Rotondo, for instance, it would not reach to its waist: the last being 9068 feet, and the former not more than 4370 feet above the level of the sea. The timber too, in the deep gorges, especially the pines, attracted the hunters' particular admiration ;

gigantic in height and girth, and perfectly straight in growth, they towered to the skies.

"The navies of the world," cried Tennyson, "might come to these forests and get all their wants supplied. France uses the Corsican pine extensively in ship-building, and reports it equal in quality to the red deal of Canada. It is, however, more brittle and less elastic than that timber."

Within reach of their winding path lay a mighty pine, uprooted by a storm: Pendril immediately placed himself alongside it, and stepping out a good yard measure at each stride, pronounced it to be forty-two paces from the root to the first branches.

The picturesque character of the scenery, however, as the hunters advanced, soon changed into that of utter desolation. The presence of man in these solitudes was alone indicated by a group of wretched huts, which an unpractised eye could scarcely distinguish from the surrounding rocks. But even these were tenantless; the poor goatherds being absent with their flocks in a still higher region than the travellers had yet reached. Within a bow-shot of these huts the tents were first pitched, at a distance of at least twelve miles S.W. from Corte. "It will be necessary," said Piero, "to consult the goatherds

before we proceed farther in this direction. The mouflon are always changing their ground, forsaking that which the goats have disturbed, and often preferring the barest hills to those on which their food seems to be most abundant. The goatherds, if they cannot tell where the mouflon are to be found, can at least tell us on what hills we shall not find them."

"And that information will of course save us much labour," replied Tennyson, as he and Pendril helped to unload the panniers containing Madame Fióre's provisions. The peasant in whose charge they were placed sat by and looked on, apparently well pleased that any one should take his share of the work. He had lighted his pipe, and with a listless, apathetic air, peculiar to the peasant of Corsica, would have coiled himself up like a hound when his work is done, if Piero had not cursed him fiercely, and ordered him to prepare at once for his homeward route.

"You idle pig," he cried, "may the mosquitoes devour you, if you lie there doing nothing: up and off, or the night will be on you, and then you'll perhaps fall into worse hands than ours."

Piero had promised Madame Fióre, who knew her man, that he would turn him homewards as soon as the provisions were landed; but, whether

it was superstitious fear, or a dread of the brigands who were known to frequent that district, the poor wretch was aghast at the prospect of having to travel alone to Corte.

He had expected the two soldiers in charge of the general's tent to return with him as soon as it was pitched; but when it was announced that a further move into the mountains was contemplated on the morrow, and that the soldiers would be retained for that purpose, his misery knew no bounds.

"Away with you," said Piero, now heartily ashamed of his craven countryman: for, although the nature of the Corsican, like that of the Cretan, is slow and lazy, yet in the wide world there exists not a more independent, a braver, or a manlier race of men than the peasants of this rugged island. So Piero spoke contemptuously and inexorably when he roared out, "Begone, you Genoese pig; and tell Madame Fióre to send a *man* with the provisions on the next occasion."

The ingenious scoundrel, seeing remonstrance was useless, immediately proceeded to load one pannier with large stones until it was sufficiently heavy to counterpoise his own weight; then seating himself in the other, he jogged off for Corte in sullen mood, muttering such imprecations.

tions as made Piero and the soldiers cross themselves until he was out of sight.

"He'll fall asleep on the road," said Pendril, "and probably capsize the panniers."

"Not he," said Piero; "fear will keep him wide awake; but if his horse stumble under that burden, the fellow stands a chance of getting his head broken in the fall."

In less than an hour after he had turned his back, the goatherds made their appearance; down they came, men, women, and children, numbering in all about a dozen souls, and driving slowly before them half-a-dozen black sheep, and at least three score of goats. It might be supposed that the presence of so many strangers, occupying with their tents the plot of ground on which their own huts were built, would at least alarm the natives, and probably create a jealous feeling which it might be difficult to appease. This, however, was not the case; none could be less disconcerted or more cordial in their demeanour than these poor peasants: they received the travellers with unaffected goodwill, and, as far as their means went, with genuine hospitality. The goats had scarcely been milked, before one of the women brought to the nearest tent a basket of chestnut bread, and a bowl of fresh, foaming goat's milk—offerings, like the Arab's salt, indi-

active of peace, welcome, and good vicinage. Even the children ventured near the tents to examine, with curious and inquiring eyes, the strange habitations raised so rapidly within reach of their huts. Certainly the contrast between the dwellings could not well have been greater; the cabins of the goatherd, built with blocks of massive granite, seemed as if they might endure for all ages, and defy all storms, come whence they would; then they looked so grey and so old that they might almost have claimed a pre-Adamite construction. The tents, on the other hand, lifted with the light breeze, as if at a moment's notice they were ready to take wing and fly away; they implied a wandering rather than a settled life; the gourd of the prophet rather than the abiding home. No wonder the almost unclad urchins stared at these airy, flimsy structures, so gay and fresh in appearance, and so unlike their own.

To the first questions of Piero respecting game on the mountains, the answer was so satisfactory that the piqueur recommended a halt for at least some days on the spot then chosen. "You could not be better placed," said he, "for the goatherds protest that for the last two months they have fed their flocks on the distant ranges in order that the herbage on the nearer mountains might obtain a strong growth before winter; and

that, notwithstanding their wandering habits, the mouflon have almost settled on the undisturbed ground in this immediate neighbourhood."

"Good news!" ejaculated the hunters simultaneously; "are these men to be depended on, Piero?"

"Certainly; it is their interest to tell us the truth; for where the mouflon feeds, he bites closely, and leaves no pasture below his teeth. The goatherds call him the devil's scythe, and heartily wish the race extinct. So they make a point of giving the best information in their power, depend upon it."

"Then I propose," said Pendril, turning to Tennyson, "that we make these our head-quarters for a week. Piero relies implicitly on the information of these peasants, and as they seem so friendly, we might go farther and fare worse."

"Agreed," replied Tennyson, in his usual pleasant tone; "there is a fine spring of water close at hand, and game in the neighbourhood;" (the chief if not the only requirements which the hardy traveller deemed indispensable on his hunting and wandering expeditions.) "Then," continued he, "have we not a bountiful supply of provisions at present, and a pleasant prospect for the future? By all means let us halt here."

Pendril then gave orders that the two soldiers, in charge of the General's tent, should return at

once to Corte; but the poor fellows looked so disappointed, having promised themselves some share in the sport, that had it not been for Piero, Pendril would have certainly indulged them with a holiday; however, they were soon reconciled to their fate by a pound of cigars and a couple of bottles of wine, with which he supplied them for their homeward journey. Like men accustomed from their youth to military discipline, they promptly obeyed orders, and in ten minutes were up in their saddles *en route* for Corte.

When their backs were fairly turned, Piero justified his interposition by explaining that the general would not fail to expect his men to return so soon as the tent was pitched; and that it was highly undesirable that men unused to the chase should be allowed to accompany the hunting party in pursuit of such wild game. He did not, however, give his chief reason for objecting to the soldiers' company: they were Frenchmen, and he a true son of Corsica; so he hated them only less bitterly than the perfidious Genoese, who had bartered him and the land of his birth for French gold.

It turned out, however, a most fortunate circumstance for at least one poor wight that Piero had so interposed in the matter; for if the soldiers had not been despatched to Corte, Madame Fióre's commissionaire would undoubt-

edly have died on the road. His prophetic soul had anticipated the disaster before he left the camp ; and not until he had been called a Genoese pig, and absolutely driven from the ground, had he mustered sufficient resolution to face the dangers of the road alone.

Scarcely had he entered the dense pine forest, below which the waters of the Restonica glitter like a silver thread, before two ruffians pounced upon him, and, dragging him fiercely to the ground, brought down from the opposite pannier a perfect cairn of stones upon the poor wretch's head. They then robbed him of all he possessed, stripping him to the skin, and leaving him literally naked, and wounded, and cruelly bruised, alone in that dark forest.

About two hours afterwards, when the soldiers approached the spot where the poor fellow was lying more dead than alive, it was some time before he could be sufficiently restored to consciousness to describe the treatment he had met with at the bandits' hands : "Two of them attacked me," said he, "so suddenly, and so furiously, that I had no time to escape from their clutches ; and, as I attempted to rise and run, one of them with the butt-end of his carbine felled me to the ground ; they then jumped upon my body, and——" He could add no more ; he had swooned away in the soldiers' arms.

Like good Samaritans, however, by bathing his wounds, and pouring wine into his throat, they soon brought him again to consciousness ; then, sharing their clothing with him, and setting him gently on his own beast, which was grazing quietly by, they led him safely to Corte.

In one month from that date these men were brought to justice : and it is not a little singular that a tobacco-box which Pendril had given to Will, and which the commissionaire had borrowed and forgotten to return to its owner, was found upon one of the bandits, and led to the conviction of both. They were brothers called Brill, and had infested for many years the gorges on the right bank of the Restonica, waylaying, mutilating, and murdering, in the most cowardly manner, every unarmed single traveller that fell in their way.

"Just five o'clock, sir," said Will, as he entered Pendril's tent with a tub of cold water fresh from the mountain spring ; "there's a fine breeze on the hills, and the goatherds have been gone with their flocks at least an hour."

Will meant this last remark as a gentle hint to his master, who, to give him his due, was never slack when anything in the shape of sport was in front of him.

"Very well, Will ; get my Lancaster rifle out

of its case, and couple up Wildfire until we are clear of the huts ; if that hound picks up any food, he is done for the day."

"Never fear that, sir ; there don't seem to be much temptation in the way anyhow, either for man or beast ; however, I'll make him safe."

"True, Will ; this is no land of Goshen ; but a lap of goat's milk is enough to do the mischief ; so keep your eye on him, pray : his leg is all right again, I see."

"Quite right, your honour ; the dog is fit to go for his life over any ground on which game can travel ; that is, if it's game of the right sort."

Will had already expressed his alarm that Wildfire's morals would be corrupted if he were encouraged to chase the mouflon ; "for," said he, "if 'tis a sheep, and he takes to it here, wont he take to it at home ? If he do, it wont be the dog's fault, I reckon. However, your honour knows best, I daresay."

"A sheep on the Welsh or Grampian hills, wild though he be, is yet a very different anim from the mouflon," said Pendril ; "and I have no doubt whatever that Wildfire's sagacity will enable him to discriminate between a mere domestic beast, whose very countenance is known by his shepherd, and a true wild animal that belongs to Dame Nature's flock alone. I should

disrespect him, Will, if I thought he would so far forget himself."

"Mouflon is mutton, sir, for all that; and you know the trouble we've had with dogs that have once tasted it; I call it the incurable vice, for I never yet knew a hound reclaimed from it."

"Don't be alarmed, Will; Wildfire has never shown a disposition to riot, and I believe never will."

The henchman shook his head, as much as to say he had grave doubts on the subject; and having thus far expressed his opinion he walked off to get the Corporal into his gear, as he called the pack-saddle and D. straps with which he had been fitted at Ajaccio.

When Pendril emerged from the tent he was not a little surprised to find the preparations for breakfast so far advanced. On a green bit of sward, scarcely larger than a good-sized dining-room table, Piero had laid out the provisions and coffee cups in a most inviting fashion: while over the embers of a turf-fire to leeward of the tent, Tennyson, with his shirt-sleeves turned up, was deeply engaged in cooking an omelet, such as only a Frenchman can make. Under his directions, also, Piero was clearing the coffee; while close at hand, Will was endeavouring, but in vain, to keep off half a dozen cocks and hens

from the Corporal's nose ; the birds were ravenous, and as the pony jerked up his head to get at the bottom of his nose-bag, the shower of barley that fell around seemed only to attract them into further acts of lively aggression.

Will's patience was sorely tested in behalf of the Corporal, and had he not remembered that the fowls were valuable property to the poor goatherds, he certainly would have knocked one or two of them on the head without the slightest compunction. Around the fire, which even at that time of the year, so early in the morning, and so high up in the mountains, was far from unacceptable, sat the four dogs on their haunches, enjoying the heat and patiently looking forward to the scraps of food which at breakfast would fall to their lot.

"This is something better than a Roman meal, as Cowper calls an egg and a radish," said Pendril, helping himself to a substantial meat-pâté which the neat-handed Fióre had so skilfully dressed.

"The poet must have alluded to Roman habits previous to the Augustan age," said Tennyson ; "for at that period of civilization and luxury they seem to have studied the gastronomic art to some purpose."

"Very true ; the Romans of that day would

certainly have declined dining with the poet, if his notions of a Roman meal were confined to a simple salad. Horace pretended to laugh at the Epicureans, but no man ever understood the various devices for tickling the palate better than he did. He who tells us so pleasantly of the "noctes cœnæque Deûm," of the tough chicken to be soused in Falernian wine, and of the meadow mushrooms, in which alone he trusted, would scarcely have ventured to entertain his friends at home or at Sinuessa with such plain fare as an egg and a radish."

A growl from Wildfire now stopped the conversation, and before Pendril could inquire what it meant Will was on his legs, sweeping with a telescope the hill-side towards which the hound seemed to point.

"There's a man crossing the rough ground near yonder goyle," said he; "and if he holds on at that pace he will be with us in ten minutes."

"Does he appear to be coming in this direction?" inquired Pendril.

"Straight for the tents, your honour; and he seems to be in a great hurry too."

"Then he must be one of the goatherds, and brings tidings of the game," said Pendril, laying his hand on the hound's head to keep him quiet.

Pendril was quite right; but, as the man approached, it required strong measures to prevent the hound from falling foul of him, and seizing him on the spot. Charon, too, roared like a lion, and would as soon have gone at his throat as at that of a Brittany wolf. Nor could any one who saw him wonder at the hound's alarm: in point of dress the poor fellow was a scarecrow from his head to his heels, and in personal appearance ugly enough to frighten a vulture from his prey. His hair, on which there was no covering, looked like the grey moor-moss as it hangs and swings in tattered locks from the branch of a blighted oak—or rather, it was long, ragged, and clotted together like the tag ends of an old brood-mare's tail. Then, in lieu of buttons, his outer garments, if such they could be called, were attached to his person by strips of undressed hide; and his sandals secured to his feet by bands of coarse grass coiled in criss-cross fashion up to the knee-joint. Yet, for all that, there was an independence in his gait and bearing, a "pride of port" that bespoke the free man—the mountaineer in his native wilds. His unkempt external appearance was at once forgotten the moment he looked you in the face; his "glittering eye" held you till his tale was told; while his earnest expression made you feel

it would be a hardened sceptic alone who could doubt the truth of that man's word.

"There's a herd of ten mouflon," said he, as soon as the dogs could be silenced, "now feeding on the plateau of Pinosa." And he pointed, in a south-westerly direction, to one of the shoulders of Monte Rotondo.

"Any old horns among them?" inquired Piero.

"That I cannot tell: I was too far off to do more than count their number. But," added he, "you may as well try to catch a cloud as a mouflon, if you take those noisy dogs to the chase."

Pendril put his hand in his pocket, and pulling out a small coin was about to present it to the goatherd, by way of handsel for the first information; but the man's pride was master of his poverty, and would not suffer him to accept a money payment for so trifling a service. The dignity of his manner was such, that Pendril did not venture to repeat the offer, lest he should give offence; and, indeed, Piero had already warned him that the mountaineers of Corsica considered it a degradation to accept money from strangers, except in payment for goods, when they were as eager for it as the rest of the world.

"If I could fancy myself in Arcadia, and met that fellow in the forest, I should certainly

take him for Pan," said Tennyson, as the goat-herd turned his back to rejoin his flock in the wilderness.

"He is unquestionably more like him than mortals in general," replied Pendril; "for he seems ready to do one a good turn without expecting the *quid pro quo* for his service. This simple act has won for him my unqualified respect."

The man had scarcely disappeared, as he came, like a spirit of the mountain, ere the hunters, attended by Will and Piero, their piqueurs, started from the camp in the direction of Pinosa, so accurately described to them by the friendly goatherd. Charon and the two spaniels were chained in Will's tent, a sufficient guard against all intrusion; the Corporal was picketed on a green bit of sward, up to his pasterns in grass; and Wildfire, in a state of perfect delight, followed his master quietly to the chase.

Immediately in front of the tents ran a little burn, the waters of which were pure and transparent as crystal, and in crossing the stream Pendril put his foot on the bank, just over a kingfisher's nest. Out flew the old bird, bright as "a living emerald," in a state of the most piteous alarm, uttering a sharp, piercing cry, and looking over its shoulder to see if the little home and its occupants were invaded by these strange

intruders. But the hunters passed on, intent upon heavier game, Pendril only remarking that the kingfisher's presence was a good sign ; " for," said he, " that bird always builds its nest where it can get a good supply of fish for itself and family."

" The water is too fine for a fly, your honour," said Will, who always carried a dozen or two in the lining of his hat ; " but it's just the brook for a spurt-net, or a sledge-hammer."

" Ay ; but where are they to come from, Will, when we want a dish of trout?"

" That's easily managed, sir. If we can't find those tools, I can tuck up my shirt-sleeves, and catch any quantity with my hands in these shallow waters."

It was quite true. On a hot summer's day, when the fish would not look at his fly, Will's great delight was to follow the bed of a mountain brook, searching like an otter on his hands and knees under each impending stone, and now leaning on his chest to secure the slippery prize as he tossed it high and dry to the nearest bank. Many a fine dish of trout has he killed in this fashion, when they were to be had in no other way, except with a sledge-hammer. But the first was the lightest work as well as the best fun, by long odds, in Will's estimation.

If, as they advanced over this wild and interesting country, the hunters found fresh and attractive subjects of conversation at every turn, it must not be imagined that for one instant they lost sight of the main object for which they had come thus far. On the contrary, as a steady and true foxhound holds his line of scent through a preserve crowded with game, and heedless of all temptation dashes ahead, intent on his flying prey, so Pendril and his party strain forwards over stock and stone, impeded by no obstruction, and turned aside by no attractions of the wild birds, or the yet wilder scene through which they are now passing. Their object is the moufflon; and all the energy they possess, all the skill in woodcraft to which they have ever attained, is now devoted to the chase of that animal.

In front of them lay a long stretch of steep, uneven ground, ending in the plateau of Pinosa, which, resting on the south-western shoulders of Monte Rotondo, bounded the vision in that direction. Above them, to the eastward, the giant mountain reared his head in all his glory, snow-capped and magnificently grand; and westward, to the right of them, the pine forests still skirting the deep gorge of the Restonica marked the precipitous course of that river almost to its fountain head.

To have attempted anything like a direct approach towards the plateau would have been hazardous in the extreme ; therefore, rather than jeopardize so fair a chance of sport, a council of war being quickly held, the circuitous route of the little burn was at once adopted in preference to the higher and more exposed ground of the mountain slope. Path along its course there was none ; and, at almost every bend of the stream, cliffs on either side, and huge white boulders in the centre, not only impeded the progress of the hunters, but often compelled them to make a long *détour* ere they could again reach the depths and security of that covered way.

Still, as it was the only safe mode of approach, they plodded on in high spirits, sometimes clambering over rocks that a goat would scarcely have surmounted ; and at others, when the ground became more open, stealing on their game like chetahs in an Indian jungle.

At length, when apparently within five or six hundred yards of the point at which the ravine touched the plateau, Piero turned abruptly from the burn, and motioning to the rest to remain quiet, he crawled cautiously up the hill-side, to take a survey of the ground in front. He had advanced about twenty yards only, when he suddenly stopped, and crouching down to the very

earth, until to all appearance he became part and parcel of it, he took a steady look at the moulton, all of which, with the exception of one, were lying down in the coarse grass on which they had been feeding. That one, however, was on guard, and that too within a very few yards of the edge of the ravine; a little nearer, and he must have commanded the very spot on which the hunters had taken their stand. Piero's observations were soon brought to a close; then backing from his position he crept down to the burn as warily as he had advanced.

Wildfire all the while had been watching these manœuvres with an intensity of expression such as he only evinced when game was at hand, and although he kept his usual station at Will's heels, his eye glistened with fire, and Pendril even fancied he could hear the quick action of the hound's heart as it beat against his ribs. The well-broken and sagacious animal, as he listened to the conversation now carried on in whispers, looked up in the speaker's face, and seemed to take his full share in the consultation then pending. Ever and anon Will put out his hand and took him gently by his soft, silky ear (the only leash by which he ever held him), just to remind the brave beast that the time for his services had not yet arrived. Between those two

there was always perfect accord in the field, though sometimes at home small differences would arise to disturb the good feeling that existed between them.

The breeze blew steadily from the south down the ravine; and so far it was favourable for a direct advance up to the edge of the plateau. But Piero, who thoroughly understood the habits of the animal, seemed to think it highly probable that the mouflon keeping watch would not long feel secure unless he could command the gorge in his rear; and accordingly every instant the piqueur expected to see his horns appear above the horizon. At every step they advanced, now in the water, and now out of it, Piero looked up incessantly to assure himself that the coast was clear, and that the apparition he dreaded was still below the high ground at the head of the gorge.

Will had no more nerves than a cucumber: he was therefore at a loss to understand the state of excitement which Piero, the experienced mouflon hunter, now exhibited—he absolutely trembled with nervousness.

The watchman, however, did not appear, and as they had now arrived within fifty yards of the ground on which the mouflon were lying, Pendril begged Tennyson to mount the bank and pick

out a pair of horns worthy of the first shot. "And," said he, "if you give me a minute's start I'll move further up the ravine and intercept them if they cross in that direction. Come along, Will, and if I can't pull one down, perhaps Wildfire will."

At any other time Tennyson would have refused point blank to accept the precedence thus assigned to him by Pendril, and would have insisted that his companion-in-arms should at least enjoy an equal share of the prime chances of the day; but in this case he instinctively felt the necessity for what on the north side of the Humber is called Scarborough law, "a blow first, and a word after;" so he proceeded at once to his post.

He had not, however, taken ten steps forward before Piero's apprehensions were suddenly realized by the appearance, not of the solitary watchman only, but of a mass of horns; and, bounding over the hedge, down came the whole herd in the wildest confusion, almost on each other's backs, and almost on the muzzle of Tennyson's gun. So instantaneous and so rapid was their descent that the leading mouflon, forced on by those in their rear, had almost reached the bed of the brook before they became aware of the imminent danger into which they were rushing. As soon, however, as they discovered it, without a moment's

hesitation, off they dashed on either side, springing into the air and bounding, as if they had wings, over the huge granite boulders that lay in their course: the whole herd seemed frantic with fear.

Crack went Tennyson's rifle: he might as well have shot at the moon dancing on the waters of the wild Restonica—crack again went his second barrel, almost before the echoes of the other had died away in the distant woods, and again with the same result. By this time Pendril had put up his Lancaster and brought it to bear on what his eye told him was the best mouflon of the herd. The animal now going at a steady gallop presented if not a broadside at least a three-quarter frontage to Pendril's view: the trigger was touched, and in an instant the father of the flock rolled headlong into the burn below—the ounce ball had shattered both shoulders, and killed him dead on the spot. Pendril fired no second shot, but bounded forward to examine his prey, as a school-boy scrambles with delight after the first head of game that falls to his own gun.

During this brief episode, long as it appears in rehearsal, Will had never relaxed his hold on Wildfire's ear, and the hound, from the unusual tenacity of the grip, probably suspected there was some contraband business going on in which he was not allowed to take a part. But when regarding

Will with an earnest and steadfast look, he saw him deliberately unsheath his knife and plunge it into the mouflon's neck, it is quite certain that from that moment the hound banished all such notions, and for the future became a mouflon hunter of the most reckless description. Indeed, although entered at deer in the forest of Craigvalloch, I believe Wildfire, after he had once killed a mouflon, preferred burying his fangs in the throat of that animal to that of any game he had ever found on his own native hills.

"A noble beast, sir," said Will, as he turned him over to examine the width of his back ; "but I wish, for the hound's sake, he was not quite so like one of our own mountain sheep."

"As much like, Will," said Pendril, "as a monkey is like a man, or a fox to a red terrier : those animals respectively may be next-door links to each other in the chain of nature, but they are nevertheless perfectly distinct animals for all that."

"And what a handsome, solid pair of horns !" continued Will, as he measured them across the brow ; "just two feet, your honour, from point to point: he would be an awkward customer in a corner with those weapons, I reckon."

CHAPTER VII.

The poacher questions, with perverted mind,
Were not the gifts of heaven for all designed ?

CRABBE.

For some minutes the rush of the mouflon into the very jaws of death remained to the hunters a complete mystery, which, in that land of solitude, they were at a loss to explain. However, the appearance, on the edge of the ravine, of a man and a mastiff, soon solved the enigma. This proved to be a noted braconnier, who, utterly ignoring the law which prohibited the use of arms to all but the French soldiery, had continued, as heretofore, to enjoy the charms of the chase ; not so much for his own livelihood as for the sake of the adventure and glorious sport which he found in this mountain land. He was called " Brando," after the beautiful stalactite cave of that name, near which, when an infant, he was found wrapped up in an old fishing net. The young lady who discovered him, and afterwards provided for his maintenance, was the daughter of an Irish gentleman, who, in the stormy days of Corsica, had joined Pascal Paoli,

and was killed in the action fought with the French at Ponte Nuovo on the 9th May, 1769. According to her own statement, her object in visiting the island so many years after her father's death, was to erect a suitable tomb to his memory, a filial act, which was certainly not left unaccomplished ; but to this very day, old as the story is, and long as it is since it was first told, there are people still living at Bastia who believe that the fair-haired daughter of Erin stood in nearer relationship to that infant than Pharaoh's daughter to the foundling of the Nile. However that may be, Brando was brought up at her expense, and at her death received a sufficient sum of money to enable him to purchase a cottage and ten hectares of land near the Bois de Cervello, on the northern slope of Monte Rosso.

From the point on which he now stood, gazing at Pendril and his party, he was probably not more than four leagues distant from his home ; so that for abundance of game and the enjoyment of wild sport he could not have been better placed. At first he did not seem to comprehend of whom, or of what, the party consisted ; but after a careful and minute survey, in which he could neither detect a cocked hat nor a red ribbon at the button-hole, he came forward without hesitation, and, pointing to the mouflon, inquired if the remainder of the flock had gone down the

ravine, or across it to the gorge of the Restonica.

The question was asked simply for the purpose of introduction; for, in reality, he needed no information as to the direction the mouflon had taken. His long-legged, gaunt companion, a rare specimen of the fierce Molossian breed, was already on the line, climbing the upper crags of the ravine, and indicating the rugged route by which the herd had quitted the valley.

"As I thought," said his master, keeping his eye upon him; "they are off for the gorges below the Lac de la Garia; they were bred in that district; and when they are disturbed they never fail to return to it, however far they may have strayed away."

Then he gave a long, low whistle, which soon brought the mastiff to his heels again.

"Young and old there were twenty of them in that herd a month ago; but the monks of St. Martino have a keen appreciation of all that is good, and for every mouflon they get from me I carry away a skinful of Vico wine from the monastery. Besides," added he, with a comical expression of the eye, "I get *indulgentia plenaria et sempiterna* at small cost into the bargain."

"Have you met with no sport to-day?" inquired Pendril.

"Ay, plenty of sport for the last six hours ; but not the kind of sport that is likely to please the good monks of St. Martino, or to fill their larder. Two gendarmes lay all night in the Bois de Cervello, within a bow-shot of my hut, and since daylight have been in hot pursuit of me."

"And have they abandoned the chase now?" asked Piero, who regarded the braconnier with a somewhat hostile expression.

"I hope not," said he ; "for as yet I have only had them at arm's length ; but if they will come into close quarters, they'll find I carry sharper horns than the mouflon, and they may probably not care to hunt me for the future. I left them struggling through the heavy ground near the Lac de Pinosa, and now, I think, they are likely to lose all scent of me."

The fine, hardy, fearless mountaineer, as he said this, absolutely chuckled with delight. Brando stood six feet two inches high ; and at that moment, no one who believed in Lavater, and was at all acquainted with the peculiar type of the Milesian countenance, especially if a row were pending, could doubt that he was a veritable sprig of the old shillelagh. Dressed as he was in a brown, shaggy goat-skin jacket, and in cap and breeches made from the skins of the chevreuil, with a long six-feet fowling-piece in his hand, he

might easily have been mistaken for Robinson Crusoe: but in outward appearance only did he bear any resemblance to Defoe's sober hero; for a more devil-may-care son of St. Patrick never trailed his coat at Donnybrook fair.

If he loved anything on earth better than the chase, it was the pastime of being chased by "French hounds," as he always called the gendarmes when sent in pursuit of him. And what dances he led them with that long, steady stride of his, that seemed to cover the ground with the freedom of a race-horse! how their curses followed him faster than their legs could carry them! and how impotent both were to do him harm! for, in spite of all, he killed his mouflon, drank his Vico wine, and told his tales at the monastery till the monks would roar again, and long for the life of freedom which he so much enjoyed.

Throughout that mountain region Brando was a great favourite; the poor farmers shared the produce of his sport, whenever a mouflon or a boar was killed within reach of their huts; the goatherds adored him for the success with which he pursued their worst enemy; and the monks loved him, not so much for the good cheer he brought as for his own good company. No wonder, then, that the inverted boar-skin, the borracha of the Spaniards, hung in full-blown

dignity from the rafters of his hut, inflated with wine ; no wonder that the brotherhood compared it to the widow's cruse that failed not ; for drain it as he would, Brando could never exhaust the rich perennial stream which the monks by a simple miracle took care to supply.

"Had it not been for that devil's-tail behind me," said the braconnier, "I should have culled the abbot's tithe from that flock before it left its feeding ground ; it will now be sunrise before they settle again in their new pasture."

"But surely you can be at no loss to find other herds on these hills," said Pendril, anxious to discover his own chance of doing so in the same neighbourhood.

"None whatever," said Brando, without the slightest reserve ; "but this herd had been resting and feeding here for the last fortnight, and that always tells in their favour as well as yours. On the chain of hills between the Lac de la Garia and the Lac de Nino, the main feeders of the Tavignano, and further on towards Monte Artica, there is a herd of mouflon in almost every gorge ; but they are so harried by the goatherds that they are neither so fat nor so accessible as the mouflon of this district."

Nothing could be more explicit, or more pleasantly given, than the information afforded by

the braconnier; and it was quite clear he at least entertained no jealousy towards the strange hunters, although it would only have been natural if he had felt as Earl Douglas did, when—

The stout Earl of Northumberland
A vow to God did make,
His pleasure in the Scottish woods
Three summer days to take.

When he had fully satisfied himself as to the exact position of the hunters' camp, and described that of his cabin to them, he made Pendril and Tennyson promise they would bring Wildfire and devote a day to the chase of an old mouflon which for three seasons he had hunted in vain.

This animal frequented the wild range of hills at the head of the Grosso River, a country so bare and so open that all attempts to approach him within rifle-shot had hitherto failed. The great width of his horns, and the unusual length of his legs, made him conspicuous even in a herd of twenty mouflon; and, as he had been constantly singled out as the object of pursuit, and had been severely hit on one or two occasions, he had become so shy that he almost defied capture. The peasants of that district, many of whom still carried "a fire-piece," in spite of the French government, were astonished at Brando's failure; because, as the one-eyed man is king

amongst the blind, this redoubtable chasseur was regarded by them as a kind of forest chief, who slew his mouflon when and where he pleased, and owned allegiance to no human power. So they firmly believed the great mouflon of the Grosso bore a charmed life, and was not to be captured by hound or man. But Brando had never seen the like of Wildfire before; and now, as he scanned his deep chest and wiry frame, and ran his eye with evident admiration over his long, muscular thighs and airy forehead, he came to the conclusion that the mouflon of the Grosso, weighted as he was with such a mass of horn, was no match for the hound before him; and he knew from that moment the days of the beast were numbered.

Before Will and Piero had finished their work of cleaning the mouflon and preparing it for transmission to the tent, a couple of large vultures sailed heavily up the ravine, eager to pounce upon the offal as soon as the hunters had left.

"I never saw those birds fail to appear," said Brando, "in less than ten minutes after a mouflon was slain; but whether they scent the carcase in the air, or see it as it lies on the ground, I cannot pretend to say. I am rather inclined to believe, however, that it is on

the eye they depend rather than on the other organ."

"The common gull has precisely the same power," said Tennyson: "throw a biscuit overboard from a Channel steamer, and, although at the moment the naked eye may fail to detect a gull within its range, yet in a very few minutes one is certain to make its appearance, and pounce on the prize."

"A vulture without feathers—*Bipes, implume!*—ay, another in his rear!" cried Pendril, as, warned by a low growl from Wildfire, he looked up and saw the two gendarmes not fifty yards off approaching them with hasty steps.

For an instant it seemed as if Brando had no intention whatever of avoiding the shock now so imminent; but discretion getting the better of his pride, he turned quietly to Pendril, and said, "Fix an early day for the Grosso; the goatherds will bring me word. Addio!" Then striding forward as if he was still on the track of the mouflon, and never once deigning to look behind him, he soon gained the crags, and in a few moments was fairly out of sight.

The gendarmes, who through the livelong night had watched the braconnier's cottage until every star had gone out in the sky, and the beams of morning lighted the dark vale of the Cervello,

were livid with rage when they saw Brando stride away and escape from their fangs at the very moment they hoped to secure him red-handed on his prey.

They had already had a six hours' struggle over the roughest ground in Corsica, and were leg-weary, fagged, and dispirited; so further pursuit was hopeless.

"Your passports and your porte-d'armes, gentlemen," said the first who spoke, touching his hat, and addressing Pendril and Tennyson simultaneously.

"Certainly—we have both," replied the latter; and after some little delay, purposely created, in order to give Brando a good start (a needless precaution, seeing the gendarmes were both done to a turn), the documents were produced. When the contents had been examined, and the description of the bearers carefully compared with the originals before them, the disappointment of the two officials may be better imagined than described: the pangs of Tantalus, soused to the chin in the waters of the Eridanus, could scarcely have been more acute than those of the gendarmes balked of their expected prize.

Yet the bitterness was as short-lived and as transient as the gloom of an April day: that buoyancy of spirits for which the French are so

remarkable, and which rarely permits that people to nurse their trouble and to grovel like barbel in the depths of a shady hole, soon came to their aid. A nip or two of brandy and a few cigars, excellent as they are in Corsica, soon brought them springing to the surface, and in ten minutes they were absolutely recounting and laughing at the miseries they had undergone in pursuit of Brando with as much glee and humour as if they themselves had not been the chief sufferers thereby.

"The chase of the mouflon may be very exciting, gentlemen, but it's a trifle to the sport of hunting a man."

"Call you this fellow a man?" said the other. "His face may be like one, but his heart and legs are those of a veritable mouflon."

Pendril and Tennyson exchanged significant glances, as much as to say, "They might as well collar a wild boar at bay;" but they made no remark, seeing the barometer was rising and the storm signal already hauled down.

Piero now came forward and claimed acquaintanceship with the gendarmes; and by stating he was private servant and piqueur to General de Leseleuc, he managed so to interest them in the object of the hunters, that in a very short time the existence of Brando was almost

effaced from their memory. Being perpetually on the look-out for offenders against the law, and especially for the braconnier class, their beat lay principally in those districts most famous for game. They were, consequently, good authorities on the subject; and Pendril having unlocked their hearts by the welcome gift of a few more cigars, received in return a stock of information which afterwards proved most serviceable in his mountain excursions.

The quartering and decapitation of the mouflon having been artistically performed, its conveyance to the tents was the next matter for consideration. The two vultures still wheeled ominously overhead, and above them, in the direction of Monte Rotondo, a pair of noble eagles were soaring in the sky, evidently keeping a bright look-out on the movements of the grosser birds below.

Will, well knowing that in the Scotch Highlands a mere bit of ribbon or gauze bound to the antlers of a deer is sufficient to scare the eagle and the raven from devouring its carcase, proposed spreading his handkerchief over the mouflon, and then, weighting it down with a heavy stone at each corner, to leave it so covered until they retired homewards. But Piero assured them that Corsican vultures were not so easily scared from their prey, and that if they did not

themselves carry away the carcase, the vultures would do so for them in an incredibly short space of time.

"What! eat a whole mouflon?" said Pendril.

"Ay!" said Piero, "and handkerchief as well, if it is at all besmeared with the animal's blood."

"Bad as the python that swallowed the blanket—mistaking it, doubtless, for the sheep on whose back it grew."

"It was only last year that the general and Captain de Grenier were shooting near the Lac de Nino, at the head of yonder gorge," said Piero, pointing to a black ridge far in the westward horizon. "They soon found a fine herd, from which the general and the captain killed a mouflon apiece. 'Lash them together by the horns, Piero,' said the general; 'we shall return by this route in a few hours, and then they can be cleaned and carried home.' But by the time we returned to the spot there was nothing to be seen of the mouflon but their horns and trotters: even my handkerchief was gone. A few yards below, two vultures, gorged to the very throat, attempted to fly away, but their wings being unequal to the task, I brained the foul birds before they could rise from the ground. Others had probably shared in the feast; but, at all events, between them they made a clean platter of it before we returned."

"Then it will never do to leave the game here, Will; for I fully intend the general to have a haunch of my first mouflon," said Pendril.

Piero, on hearing that announcement, immediately held a brief consultation with the gendarmes, who soon settled the matter, and undertook to convey the mouflon between them as far as the tents, by which arrangement it was no longer necessary that Will or Piero should be detached from the party.

The hunters now turned upwards, and after a long ascent reached the brink of a hollow glen lying between Pinosa and Monte Rotondo, and called by Piero the Valley of the Vecchio. But as that torrent descends from a basin situated on the north-east side of the mountain, and within a couple of furlongs of its actual summit, the correctness of his geonomy may fairly be doubted: at all events, this valley had no visible outlet at its upper end: it appeared to be what the French call an *impasse*, or *cul-de-sac*, having a mass of almost perpendicular white crags rising like a wall at the head of the gorge, and defying further progress in that direction. It was a perfect amphitheatre of the wildest description: in fact, a picture of desolation painted by Nature's own hand in her earliest and grandest style.

So engrossed by it were Pendril and Tennyson, bursting as it did suddenly on their sight,

that they could have gazed on it till sunset. Will, however, whose estimation of fine scenery depended entirely on the amount of fine cover it displayed, had taken his master's glass, and was examining with a keen scrutiny every rock, fissure, and inequality on the far side of this vast chasm. Now and then his eye would catch a figure so like a mouflon at rest that every instant he expected to see a toss of the head or some other movement indicative of life in the object before him. But Will's vision was at fault, and not his imagination, for in that quality of mind he was notably deficient ; and further experience taught him that, from the similarity of colour between the rocks and the wild animals, it was almost impossible, while the latter were motionless, to distinguish between the one and the other. This, he might have known, was one among the countless provisions of an all-wise Creator for the security of his creatures, and which, in their wild state, is instinctively adopted by them from the pied ptarmigan of the hill-tops to the yellow sand-grouse of the desert, and from the hare on her ferny form to the tawny tiger of an Indian jungle.

Will handed the glass to Piero in despair, but Nature proved too strong even for him ; he swept the glen in vain, notwithstanding at that moment

no less than a dozen mouflon were lying chiefly on the very summit of the grey boulders, but which, although within the scope of his vision, were now, by their colour and position, fairly undiscernible even by his practised eye.

The discovery of the game was a mere matter of accident: a pair of ravens sat on the point of a crag at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards below the spot on which the hunters stood. They were holding hoarse and dismal converse with each other, and appeared to be less suspicious of danger than those birds are in general. Piero, who construed their language into curses, at once associated the discordant sounds with some evil that was to befall the party, and turning to Tennyson begged permission to try a shot with his rifle at one of the ill-boding birds; "for," said he, "if I kill one of them, the other will carry off the curse on his own head, and relieve us."

Tennyson, half inclined to join in the old distrust of a raven's croak, handed him the weapon, with the intimation that he had better give them both barrels. Piero immediately placed himself flat on his chest, took a steady aim, touched the trigger, and the imprecations of one raven at least had ceased for ever; then, resting on his bended knee, as the other soared away in flight,

he took a snap shot, tipped the pinion, and brought the bird toppling to the ground.

Heaven's artillery never burst upon that solitary glen with more startling effect, for the tongues of a thousand echoes were at once untied by the double shot! At first, the sound seemed to rebound like a shuttlecock from rock to rock, and then rolling rapidly on, as if the whole valley were in wild commotion, to die away like distant thunder in the cliffs below.

Not more instantly did the warriors of Clan-Alpine start into life at the signal of their chief than the herd of mouflon at that terrific sound! The surprise, too, of Snowdon's knight could scarcely have been greater than that of the hunters when they saw the affrighted animals spring as it were into existence out of the very rocks themselves.

A herd of fourteen mouflon, counting old and young, of which there seemed to be an equal proportion, rushed precipitously towards an open spot, and there, massing together as a flock of Cheviots might have done under like circumstances, they made straight for the crags. Up these they managed to ascend apparently with great ease; yet the leaps they took, sometimes in a perpendicular, but generally in a slanting direction, were perfectly astounding. They

doubled up their legs under them as they sprang in the air, exactly as in former days a famous horse, called Cats'-meat, was wont to do under poor Webb, of Hethe, when, with a flying fox from Gravenell Wood, he crossed the Bicester Vale like a centaur, and shook his tail in the teeth of Drake's best men. There were giants in those days in that country ! But the pace at which the enemy travels has stopped even them ; some it has brought to a stand-still, some to an arm-chair in the corner, and *væ victis*, some to their mother earth—gone to ground, sir ; ay ! and gone for ever.

But *revenons à nos moutons*. Up went the mouflon in single file over the face of that precipice until they gained a safer ground, when, breaking into a gallop, they all disappeared in wild flight over the distant hills.

"Better luck another day," said Pendril, as he noted in his memory the exact spot at which the mouflon broke cover when they quitted the ravine. "We shall catch them here again, if I am not mistaken, and then be better prepared for them."

"I hope so," said Tennyson, with perhaps the slightest shade of disappointment just flitting across his face. "I, at all events, must live on hope for the present."

"And good food, too," replied Pendril. "Give me the pleasures of hope before those of memory, in spite of what the banker-poet says in favour of the latter. A pleasant prospect is the salt that seasons a man's life—the cake he has not eaten—the guinea in his pocket—the uncorked bottle of twenty port—and, if you look yet further ahead, who shall impose a limit to the extent and realization of a good Hope?"

So they turned for the tents.

CHAPTER VIII.

Up the ribb'd crag-tops driven,
 Up she clambers, steep on steep ;
 O'er the rocks asunder riven
 Springs her dizzy, daring leap.

SCHILLER.

THE hard work of the chase and the elasticity of feeling created by mountain air soon produced their good effects on the vigour and endurance of the hunting party. In a few days only all superfluous matter incidental to the human frame was reduced to a minimum, and speedily replaced by a development of muscle worthy of the ancient athletes. Assuredly no modern scheme invented for the purpose of bringing the body into subjection, or for training it to the highest state of physical power of which it is capable, can be compared with this simple process. Assay it, ye heavy weights ; go, climb the wild region of Le Niolo, and pursue the mouflon for one month through his native fastnesses, and, depend on it, you will require no doctor to prescribe your diet and undermine your constitution ; and no engineer to clear

away promontories, beneath which the best blood of Harkaway, measuring six feet in girth and nine inches under the knee, has so often staggered through the binding clay.

The angel that comes down from heaven and troubles those pools of Bethesda in which Wilson and Gully work their miracles, is simply the air of those blessed Malvern hills. Without it the poor paralytic would not so often cast away his crutches, and leap again with joy; the wet sheet would soon be the winding-sheet of the London *roué*; and the gross man would be skinned in vain. Nevertheless, to be just, that process of decortication is a wonderful substitute for exercise; and, although it does not give muscle, many a Naaman will own that his flesh has come again "like unto the flesh of a little child," at the command of those Malvern prophets.

That oft-quoted phrase of "*Vires acquirit eundo*," although used by the poet in a moral sense, was strictly applicable to Pendril's physical condition; the harder he walked the stronger he grew, and the longest day only seemed to give him fresh power for further exertion. Such, too, was the improved form of the others, that Tennyson declared he felt the earth lift like a spring-board under him as he traversed the mountain-side: the shadow had gone back

ten degrees on his dial, and the wiry old chasseur really looked some fifteen years younger than he seemed to be when he first landed at Ajaccio.

On a Saturday evening, after six days of continuous hard work—

Mollitèr austerum studio fallente laborem,

sweetened, that is to say, by an amount of sport which, besides its wild and ever-varying character, possessed the charm of undeniable good quality, the hunters had returned to their tents somewhat later than usual, and, for the first time, not quite so well satisfied with their day's diversion as they were generally wont to be.

The gentlemen had finished their dinner, and were sitting in front of the tents enjoying the mountain breeze, as it descended with delicious, life-giving freshness from the snow-capped hill above. About a hundred yards below them the goatherds were engaged in milking their flock—or, rather, the women were doing the real work while the men lay scattered on the ground, humming plaintive Corsican airs, or smoking their pipes, in a dreamy and listless fashion worthy of veritable Asiatics.

"I don't feel half comfortable," said Pendril, "at the result of our day's sport; if it had been a matter of half a dozen mouflon fairly stalked, or fairly run down in chase, I should feel no

qualms on the subject ; but the wholesale destruction of so much game I must own gives me pain."

The hunters had met that morning within a short distance of the spot from which Piero had killed the pair of ravens, on the first day of their visit to the valley of rocks ; and having ascertained that the direction of the wind was favourable for approaching the narrowchink by which the mouflon had climbed the precipice and escaped from the glen, Pendril and Tennyson, after a long and perilous *détour*, contrived to post themselves at a point from which they obtained perfect command of the whole pass. When thus posted, they were about fifty yards from the edge of the precipice—a sufficient space, as they thought, to enable the mouflon, if they adopted that route, to gain a good footing on the hill, and to be clear of the rocks in the event of their falling before the hunter's fire.

In the meantime Will and Piero, accompanied by Charon, had entered the jaws of the ravine : but as the hills on either side were, literally, as steep as a wall, and the level ground between them, if any portion of it could be called level, consisted of huge granite boulders scattered thickly over an area of at least one hundred acres, the progress they made in drawing such a cover was small indeed. Charon, however, proved to be a host in himself ; on two or three previous

occasions he had taken to the new game kindly, and now, as he touched upon a fresh night-scent, and swung over the rocks, and lashed his sides with his long feathered stern, Will knew the game was at hand, and would be roused at the very first sound of the hound's tongue.

The welcome note was soon heard : full, rich, and harmonious, it burst forth as that of a tenor bell—

Swinging slow with solemn roar
Over some wide-watered shore ;

and, as it fell, re-uttered by a thousand tongues, on Pendril's ears, in his far-distant hiding-place, every nerve in his body tingled at the sound.

In a moment twenty mouflon or more were afoot in the valley ; for some time the affrighted beasts bounded hither and thither in the wildest confusion, as if unable to distinguish the quarter from which the sound originated ; but, as the hound drew nearer, away they went in one dense herd, only separating and following each other when the nature of the ground compelled them to do so. At first it seemed to be their intention to break away on the lower side, for they ran in a sort of semicircle, gradually edging off towards the gorge at which the men had entered ; but the moment they caught sight of Will, now mounted on a boulder, and waving his cap fran-

tically, they headed back, and went straight for the cliff. One large mouflon, somewhat lighter in colour than the rest, led the herd, keeping about ten yards in front, and every now and then halting on some prominent spot to reconnoitre the ground ahead. And now, as he gained the base of the acclivity, up which his perilous passage lay, he scanned it like the leader of some forlorn hope might have done, for an instant only, and then dashed up the face of the rock without further delay. One by one, as fast as they could follow him, came the rest of the herd, the last hurrying on in a state of panic at the near approach of the baying hound. However, there was no jostling on the cliff; each waited for the other, even with punctilious ceremony; as one advanced the next followed, springing and pitching in his turn upon points of rock apparently no larger than the crown of a hat. It was a marvellous sight. Up, up they mounted, but so steadily and so deliberately as if they were well aware that instant death would be the penalty of one false step.

Three hundred feet below, at the foot of the precipice, Charon came to a check; he had clambered to a ledge about twenty feet from the ground, and being unable either to advance or retreat, he absolutely roared with rage. Will would have

rushed to the rescue; but the intense interest aroused by the saltatory feats of the mouflon, the danger they incurred at every step, and the ambush into which they were hurrying, so attracted his attention that he had no eyes left for the hound's predicament.

In a few seconds more the leading mouflon had gained the summit of the cliff in safety; then another and another followed close on his haunches, until ten or a dozen had fairly landed on the mountain side. A moment's hesitation on the part of the chieftain, as he suddenly caught sight of the hunters, gave Temnyson a steady shot and in another moment the fine beast fell dead on the spot. Pendril took the next, but was not equally fortunate; his ball passed through the animal's fore leg, just above the knee, smashing the bones in twain, upon which the poor brute pitched on his horns, but instantly recovering himself, he wheeled round, and dashed madly back on the rest of the herd, now on the very brink of the precipice. The greater portion of these, however, by a rapid flank movement managed to avoid the shock, but the wounded beast, no longer able to control his course, bore down with terrific speed towards the top ledge of the cliff, and at that point coming into violent collision with a ewe mouflon and a half-grown

lamb at her heels, over they all went headlong into the gulf below.

Will, who saw the whole catastrophe, described it as the most awful sight he had ever witnessed. The impetus acquired by the first rush, and the velocity so immediately attained by the falling bodies of the mouflon, carried them instantly over every projection of cliff with which they came into contact. Yet, as they struck a ledge head-foremost, they appeared to make tremendous efforts to gain a footing, but all in vain ; the result was only a desperate somersault from one point to the other, until they came lifeless to the ground.

Charon, too, had a narrow escape, for the wounded mouflon grazed him in his fall : a few inches nearer, and the hound must have been inevitably killed.

"It was, I repeat, a disastrous affair, to say the least of it," said Pendril, continuing the conversation, as if the scene still haunted him ; "and I cannot help thinking it was chiefly owing to my own mismanagement."

"Or mine," replied Tennyson, not willing that his friend should regard himself as the principal culprit. "If I had given the leader more law the blunder might probably not have occurred ; though I really believe the whole thing was rather an accident than a blunder."

"No, no ; it was my hand that did the mis-

chief. The shot was a fair one, and the veriest tailor could not have managed it more adroitly. After all, it's an ill wind that blows no luck. These poor goatherds will be grateful for the game, and will rejoice to find that in the pursuit of their enemy we spare neither sex nor age."

At that moment two of the goatherds' wives, accompanied by Piero and the Corporal, were approaching the tents, bearing the spoils of the day. One of the women carried the small mouflon aloft on her shoulders, holding it by its hind legs; while the other guided the pony on whose back the three heavy ones were securely strapped to the pack-saddle. Piero brought up the rear, being busily employed in smoking Pendril's cigars, which he only removed from his mouth to swear at the women or the pony—whom he evidently regarded in an equal light—as simply beasts of burden born to relieve the lords of the creation from the curse of labour to which they were all doomed—a point of faith religiously observed by every sturdy peasant in Corsica.

The goatherds and their families, for the first time in their lives, were now living on the fat of the land. Pendril not only provided them with as much venison as they could eat, but the unconsumed portion of the excellent Faviani wine, so bountifully supplied by Madame Fióre, was

also divided amongst them to gladden their hearts. For these gifts their gratitude was boundless, and men, women, and children seemed to vie with each other in expressing it by performing any act of service required from them with the utmost readiness and good-will. They brought pine wood from the forest, which, even in its green state, made capital fuel; they carried the game home from long distances and inaccessible spots; and acted as capable and trustworthy guides. But in addition to these services the women and children brought their almost daily offerings of fresh eggs, milk, and honey in the comb. This last, although deliciously fragrant, was yet somewhat bitter in flavour: a peculiarity imparted to it by the flower of the box-tree, which in Corsica assumes the proportions of a handsome forest tree.

Thus, when the question arose as to a further move into the mountains towards Monte Cinto and the forest of Aitone, the good vicinage in which they had fallen had no little weight in detaining the hunters for a few days longer on their present ground. Game was still to be found in almost any direction; they were certain to get no better neighbours, and might fall in with worse; Corte was within easy reach, and the general had half promised to pay them a visit; then the day on the Grosso was yet in store—a

day on which Brando hoped to see the king of Le Niolo, as he called the great mouflon, succumb to the speed and power of Wildfire. Twice had the braconnier been to the tents to remind Pendril that the horns of that mouflon would never be grander, nor his weight heavier, than they were at the present moment. "Three years ago," said he, "I first promised the good monks of Martino one of his haunches ; but he still lives ; and, happily, the monks are not likely to die from their long abstinence on that account."

But there was yet another reason for not striking his tents, to which Pendril attached the greatest importance, and that was anxiety on Temple's account. From the day that he quitted Corte for the Val-dell'-Orco to the present time, Pendril had received no tidings whatever either of his whereabouts or his movements. The provision-basket, now escorted by a couple of men, never failed to reach the tent on alternate days ; and, as Pendril examined the packet of letters usually forwarded by Madame Fióre, it was quite painful to witness the disappointment he expressed on not finding a line from Temple.

So to push further afield, to a region as unknown to the peasantry of Corte as the mountains of the moon, would be at once to sever their present communication with that city and put an end to the chance of hearing from Temple

during their peregrination in that savage land. Accordingly, Pendril having talked the matter over with Tennyson, it was agreed to postpone their expedition to the deep forest of Aitone, at all events, for the present; and in the meantime either Temple himself might turn up or letters arrive which would clear away the mist of uncertainty and perplexity in which the hunters were now involved.

"I very much fear," said Will, whose opinion, when he gave it, was always entitled to respect, "that Mr. Temple has dropped into trouble, or he never would have suffered your honour to remain so long without hearing from him. I should like, if I may be allowed, to go in search of him; and if he's above ground, the cover must be a thick one if I don't unkennel him."

"No, no, Will; that will never do; we can't afford to run the risk of losing you as well as him: besides, you little know the danger into which Mr. Temple so wilfully rushed when he deserted us at Corte."

"That's exactly why he may now want assistance. Every horse that jibs is safe to get its punishment; but I should be grieved to think Mr. Temple suffered ill-usage because he had a stronger fancy for a young woman's company than for your honour's."

Pendril, however, was firm on the point, and

considered that the time had not yet arrived for taking active measures in Temple's behalf: for such was the peculiarity of his temper, that if he were not really *in extremis*, he would be certain to turn round and denounce all proffered aid as an unwarrantable interference in his private affairs. He was the very man to snarl out—

Let me alone
To pick my own bone,

or to complain, like the stern moralist, that he was encumbered with help at the time when he did not need it.

"No, Will, we must have patience in this matter: we'll stand by and look out for danger, but it will not do to cut away the lifebuoy just yet."

But while his friends are feeling this solicitude on his account, how has Temple fared in the attractive but adventurous sport in which he has been engaged? Jules Gerard may glory in the excitement of lion-hunting "in dark Cimmerian desert," and at the hour of "blackest midnight;" the gallant Waterton may recount, as he does with such graphic power, his wondrous ride on a cayman's back, the recital of which is enough to make even a Napier turn pale; Du Chaillu may tell of his encounters in the solitude of an equatorial forest with monsters heretofore unknown to man; Gordon Cumming

may drive a hippopotamus by the tail through the deepest pool in the Limpopo with more ease and less noise than an Irishman would drive a pig home from a neighbouring market: ay, and the poet may sing of that glorious chase when, in the days of ancient chivalry, according to "a legend of the Quorn countrie," the redoubtable Peter Miles challenged "Sir Gilmour" for the championship of the heavy weights, and disdainfully exclaimed—

Ye Melton men, ye Leicester knaves,
Come ride with me, say I;
Five minutes over Skeffington,
And then lie down and die;

but the spirit of excitement and daring which carried those heroes to the front of the fray, and brought them out of it with triumphant colours, was a tame devil compared with that which took possession of Temple as he entered the Val-dell'-Orco on his present adventure.

When he left Corte, and turned his back on his friends, he had thrown overboard every scruple of conscience on that score, and had resolved to carry no needless weight in the race for which he had now entered. "One gun less," said he to himself, as his thoughts reverted to the hunting party, "will be rather an advantage to them than otherwise; and as Pendril and his new friend fraternize so well together, it is consoling to

reflect that my company will be missed by neither." So, having contrived, without any great effort, to smother for a time that "still small voice" which will make itself heard at sometimes very inconvenient seasons, he persuaded himself that, so far from doing his friends an injury, he had rather done them a service by not encumbering them with his additional presence, a substitute for which they had now found in each other's company.

It is strange how ingenious we become in the art of moral self-defence, and how clever we are in throwing dust in our own eyes when we desire not to see the monster which, like Frankenstein, we have created with our own hands! But, sooner or later, the silent monitor assumes a hideous shape, beyond the conception of Mrs. Shelley, or even Dante, and then it will scare the stoutest hearted. Temple's time had not yet come. He had now managed not only to shift his burden without a twinge from his own shoulders, but to lay it complacently on those of his friends; repeating the old manœuvre in the garden, wherein the man pointed to the woman and the woman pointed to the snake—*chacun pour soi*, even in that first indictment.

CHAPTER IX.

* * * *

Lambro presented, and one instant more
 Had stopped this canto, and Don Juan's breath,
 When Haidée threw herself her boy before,
 Stern as her sire : " On me," she cried, " let death
 Descend—the fault is mine. This fatal shore
 He found, but sought not. I have pledged my faith,
 I love him—I will die with him. I knew
 Your nature's firmness—know your daughter's too.

DON JUAN.

IN the dead of the night on which Temple had parted with Agnese, a light barca, impelled by a crew of six strong men with muffled oars, stole swiftly and silently into one of those wild fiords which abound on the west coast of Corsica. From the straight course it held towards the high land there could be little doubt that the man at the tiller was at home on that dangerous coast. "Ease all," said he, in a low, imperative tone of voice, as the boat came stem for'ard towards the reef of rocks on which he was about to land ; "ease all, and fend off; the French wolves have long ears, and it wont do to disturb them yet awhile." Galofaro then jumped ashore, and in five

minutes, notwithstanding the long ears and the lynx eyes that guarded the shore, the small but valuable cargo of spices which the boat carried were safely landed by the crew.

"Now, men," continued the smuggler, "lash your oars to the thwarts, knock out the plugs, and sink her; the sea will tell no tales."

"How deep?"

"The deeper the better: in ten-fathom water she'll be safer than in Port Mahon."

So the swarthy Moor who pulled the bow-oar shoved off the barca, and in a few minutes more she settled steadily "down amongst the dead men," with nothing but a small red buoy, carefully moored below the surface, and scarcely larger than a perch float, to mark the spot in which she lay. The Moor continued swimming for some time in circles over the ground, to make sure that all was snug below; but a dab-chick, that has suddenly ducked beneath the nose of a dog, might as easily be discerned in the depths of a mountain-tarn, as the barca ten fathom deep in her bed of seaweed; yet, when Galofaro calls she will float again, light as the bird itself, o'er the topmost crest of the wave, and laugh at the storm.

"Now, then, for the cliffs," whispered the captain; "and the first man that speaks shall

swallow my marline-spike, head and all." And to prove it was no idle threat, he drew a long heavy stiletto deliberately from his waist, and pointed out the route by which the men, carrying each of them a couple of boxes slung over the shoulder, were to gain the macchie, and then defy pursuit.

At that moment a small bright light from an alumette burst forth in the cliff within a hundred yards of the rock on which the men were assembled, and the voices of the patrol, as they met to confer and to light their pipes, sounded so ominously near, that Galofaro again thought it necessary to caution the crew.

"Look to your feet, men, in scaling the heights; the whole coast is alive with land-sharks; and if you crush a stick or start a loose stone, they will be down upon us in swarms; so mind how you tread, I say."

It was quite true; every douanier in that district, and every man in a picked troop of gendarmes, were there on the look-out for Galofaro, and for the rich prize of contraband goods which it was expected he would run on the western side of the island. But Galofaro gave little heed to the value of the cargo, great as it was; his main object and his highest delight was to outwit the officers and defy the law; the adventure was

what he prized, not the gold : and then, as his heart yearned after his daughter, it was a matter of the last importance to him and herself that *the run* should be accomplished with the utmost secrecy ; otherwise, the blockade of the Val-dell'-Orco would be the immediate result of its discovery, and his visit to the Grotta rendered all but impossible thereby.

"Hark," said De Grenier, who at that moment had struck a light ; "I'll swear I heard a splash in the water below."

"Nothing but the mullet," responded the douanier, "which you may always hear in this bight when the sea is calm and the wind is off shore."

"Then I'll bring my rifle down to-morrow ; it will be capital ball-practice, and at least more agreeable sport than smuggler hunting."

"That's a matter of fancy, captain ; the sport I prefer is catching a bale of goods or a box of spice that has never paid duty ; one such haul is better game than a shoal of mullet."

By this time Galofaro and his men were crossing with cat-like caution the narrow path used by the douaniers in their nightly rounds, and were now actually within a few yards of De Grenier as he rattled on upon the subject ever uppermost in his thoughts.

"But mullet shooting must be tame work compared with the sport of salmon-fishing. The English mouflon hunter I met at Corte told me that a friend of his, a M. de Warriner, a celebrated English chasseur, had killed on the Garry, a Scotch river belonging to the Chevalier d'Ellys, a hundred fine salmon in one month, and that, too, with a rod and line of the most delicate construction."

"Too many, I should think, for the London market, captain: but how did he entice all those fish to take his bait?"

"He lured them to the surface, as far as I could understand, with a kind of humming-bird bound to a hook, a food on which the Scotch salmon get immensely fat, and then he sent them to his friends."

"Sacra Mater! the man must be a prince to give so many fish away. But what cigars are you smoking, captain? they emit an aroma such as I never met with in tobacco before."

A whiff of the spicy gale, as the smugglers gained the scrub and passed rapidly to windward, caught for one instant the attention of the douanier; but in another the more powerful fumes of tobacco prevailed over the delicate aroma, and bore it neutralized away.

"Mine is veritable home-grown Corsican

tobacco," said De Grenier, who, from his cloud-compelling habits, had failed to notice anything unusual in the "whiffing winds;" "and, in truth, I find nothing so good on this side the Red Sea."

In the meantime, the *Morgana*, bearing the rest of the crew, is lying in the distant offing at single anchor, like a greyhound in a leash, ready for a start; and, with the first blink of daylight, the whole pack of douaniers, still posted in the dense scrub, are keenly watching her movements; but as well might they hope to lay hands on the phantom ship and her demon crew as capture Galofaro and that felucca. Her cargo, too, of precious spices is now travelling through the bush on the backs of men who will bear it safely to its destination, and her captain is sleeping soundly and tranquilly, as an infant in its cot, in his own eagle's nest on the boldest cliff of the Val-dell'-Orco.

The moment Galofaro set foot in his own abode his nature seemed to undergo a complete change. He, who among the desperate fellows that composed his crew was by far the first and most desperate of all in every deed of daring and violence, became, in the company of those he loved, the gentlest and kindest of human beings. Agnese appeared to possess and to exercise a

power over him akin to that which the serpent-charmers of the East exhibit in their treatment and manipulation of the hooded snake. The passions of the man seemed to be purified by her presence, and to lose that ferocity which he took small pains to suppress in his rougher intercourse with the rest of the world.

How often does it happen that the light hand of a woman softens and controls, with a kind of magic touch, the temper of the most fretful steed ; when, the moment a man gets on his back and takes him by the head, the same animal becomes an ungovernable brute ! The influence of Agnese, however, over this turbulent spirit was not altogether attributable to her management of him, but rather to the absorbing affection with which he regarded her. Galofaro, when he lost his beautiful wife, the only idol to which he had ever knelt, filled up the niche in his heart with her living image and worshipped it with his whole soul.

But this strong feeling which bound the father to his child was mixed up with a fierce element of jealousy, not usually found in the pure, unselfish nature of parental affection.

Over and over again Galofaro had been heard to swear that the man was not born to whom he would give Agnese in marriage ; and terrible

were the pangs he suffered when the idea of being separated from her by such a contingency flashed across his mind.

So well known was this resolve to those best acquainted with the man, that, beautiful and tempting as the fruit was, it still hung on its parent tree safe as yet from the longing eye and grasping hand of every neighbouring intruder. Once, indeed, an aspiring youth, the son of a merchant at Ajaccio, had been rash enough to lay siege to the Grotta itself, reckless of all danger. Galofaro, however, returning suddenly from sea, discovered the love-sick swain in the very act of playing Romeo beneath the maiden's balcony; and, before he could escape, the crew pounced upon him, and only awaited the chief's signal to give his carcase to the horse-crabs.

Galofaro, however, had no thought of taking the youth's life, but coolly ordered his men to bear him to a goyle in the dark forest below: and there, turning his face to a mighty pine, they compelled him to encircle it with both arms, and lashed him by the wrists fast to the tree. When he was thus secured, Galofaro with a savage jest claimed the young man's gratitude for providing him with an evergreen bride: "Cling to her, and embrace her tenderly," said he, "for neither in life nor death will she desert

you." Then whispering to one of the men to come and cut him adrift in the morning, the smuggler left him to his fate. This, however, proved a sadder one than he intended ; for the man forgot or neglected the order ; and at least a year afterwards, when all search for him had ceased, the poor fellow was found by a party of chasseurs, still standing against the tree, a bleached skeleton.

The tale oozed out ; but the youth's father had long employed Galofaro in contraband trade ; his tongue was thus tied, and consequently no steps were ever taken to bring the offenders to justice : but the smuggler's name and that deed will never be forgotten in Ajaccio.

Galofaro had not been long at the Grotta before he discovered from Agnese's manner that something unusual had occurred during his absence. The nervous trepidation with which she met him, and the flood of tears that gushed forth, when he questioned her on the subject, aroused his suspicions and filled him with intense uneasiness.

"Tell me," said he to her, with a tender emotion for which no one who knew his stern nature would have given him credit, " what mean those clouds on Agnese's brow ; and why is her eye dimmed by tears ? her smile was ever wont

to be joyous as the morn, and her words of welcome refreshing as dew ! Tell me, my child, who is it, or what is it that has troubled you ?”

For the first time in her life Agnese could not at once look her father in the face, and return a fearless answer to the questions he had so pointedly put to her ; and, as she scorned to prevaricate, it was some time before she could so far control her feelings as to make a clean breast of it, there and then. A short and painful struggle, however, soon brought her courage up to its usual high level ; and then, as her eye rose and met her father’s, Galofaro quivered to the very core of his heart when he heard the earnest, decided, and unambiguous answer Agnese made.

“ My father,” she replied in a soft, beseeching tone, “ it is but a short story, and you shall hear it all.” She then recounted to him minutely the adventure in the valley ; the seizure of the kid by the rapacious eagle, and its happy rescue from instant death by the hand of Temple, “ who had suddenly,” she said, “ come to its aid as if from heaven.” Then, as she told him of the meeting at the well, the converse in the grove, and the promise he had given her to return and ask her father’s consent to their intended marriage, her voice faltered, and her eye again trembled as if there were yet further revelations

which she dared not now disclose. It was, however, but a momentary hesitation—a weakness such as any maiden might feel when the confession of her “true love’s passion” was wrung from her under similar pressure: so, recovering herself, she went on: “This is the fourth day since he left for Corte, and he will be here, I believe, before sundown, to speak to you on a subject in which we are both equally interested——”

“He will be a bold man to do that,” said Galofaro, in a husky tone of voice, well known to his crew, but never before heard by Agnese.

“He *is* bold, father, or I would not ask you to listen to his appeal: had he been otherwise I should have hated him at first sight.”

The smuggler could now no longer conceal from himself the uncomfortable fact that Temple had stolen a march upon him in his absence, and had turned the time to account, not only in winning his daughter’s affections, but, as he believed, in weakening them towards himself—and at this inference a cold shiver passed over his frame as if he had been suddenly struck down by malaria; and the strong man’s spirit absolutely writhed with agony. The fever, however, which was smouldering within him was checked

for a time by the bitter yet needful tonic of further reflection.

"The girl," he said to himself, "is a stiff-tempered one, and will stand up against a storm like a Memel pine. Rough measures will only rouse her into sturdy resistance ; so I'll humour her fancy now ; and by-and-by I shall be able quietly to trap the young thief that would so ruthlessly seize and tear that treasure from my heart."

"At all events, Agnese," continued the smuggler, "it will be time enough to consider his proposals when he comes to make them himself : what his plans may be I cannot pretend to guess ; but his wish to confer with me sounds honourable and straightforward."

Agnese threw herself into her father's arms ; and, for an instant, his rugged nature yielded to the influence of true paternal love ; but, as the thought occurred to him that it was solely for the sake of this young foreigner she was now coaxing him with her caresses, the current of this affection again curdled up, as if it were suddenly acidulated by a strong mixture of gall and vinegar. Thus, because Agnese loved Temple, Galofaro pre-hated him ; and if the slightest suspicion had crossed his mind that Temple's attentions were simply those of a mere gallant, the bright

dirk of the smuggler would have been speedily darkened by his life's blood.

A wild scream from the sea-eagle, chained on the topmost rock of the Grotta, now startled Galofaro more effectively than if a shot from a rifle-cannon had been fired across his bows, and, at the same time, brought a flush on Agnese's cheeks, such as the fairest rose of Provence might envy. That cry, only given when some strange sight or sound caught the eagle's attention, was never heard by the smuggler without alarm ; for twice, at least, had his citadel been saved from the Gauls by that vigilant sentry. So, grasping his pistol, which, with a long knife, always hung ready in his belt, Galofaro rose in haste, and looking down from a loophole overhanging the ascent to the Grotta, he discovered Temple then at the foot of the rock, commencing to mount it as if he were already perfectly familiar with the path and the spot to which it led.

On the small balcony, as Agnese was wont to call it, in front of the Grotta, and serving as a fence against the precipice, a rude parapet was constructed with loose rugged boulders weighing some two or three hundredweight apiece, and piled one upon the other like cannon balls in an arsenal, ready for immediate use. Over the staircase, which was formed by a straight but precipitous groove, hollowed from the rock, and

descending without a zigzag from the top to the bottom, these blocks of stone were intended to travel; and any one of them, toppled over, would clear away and crush a battalion of soldiers attempting to mount by that passage. Thus the position, unassailable from above, was also, barring a surprise, all but impregnable from below, and might easily have been held by a couple of resolute defenders against any number of men that could be brought to its attack.

When Galofaro spied Temple planting his foot with no small amount of confidence on the first steps of the staircase, his immediate impulse prompted him to start a loose stone and dispose of the unwelcome visitor without further ceremony. Accordingly, in one stride, his hand was upon the parapet; and, as he paused for a moment to select a boulder and start it in a right direction, Agnese rushed to the staircase, and, descending a few steps, looked up with a wild gesture, and exclaimed, "Down with it, father; the rock that crushes him shall crush me first: if he is to die, let me die too."

Galofaro stayed his hand: Virginus would have done so at that appeal! the image of his lost wife, the star of the Cyclades, stood before him in living statuary; her head thrown back, her figure defiant, and her eye gleaming with desperation! The smuggler was appalled by the

apparition ; and for once in his life his right arm, like Jeroboam's at the altar in Bethel, lost its power, as if it had withered to the socket.

"By heavens, Agnese, you do your father an injustice," said he, suddenly changing his tactics ; "if the young man is true to you, a hair of his head shall not be injured."

For the moment the smuggler was in earnest with that vision before him, old memories crowded in and paralysed his fell purpose. He saw, too, his daughter utterly reckless of danger, and ready to sacrifice her life on the same altar with that of him to whom she had given her heart. The argument was irresistible ; the wind dead in his teeth ; so, making a virtue of necessity, he wore round and ran before the gale.

"Give me your hand, Agnese," said he, with a pathetic touch in the tone of his voice ; and in a second his daughter was again at his side trusting him implicitly, and only condemning herself for venturing to suspect her father's loyalty.

Temple received a rough but apparently hearty welcome at the hands of Galofaro. How Agnese received him may be better imagined than described ; at all events, that interview will now remain a secret for ever ; but what the results of Temple's visit were must be made the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER X.

Loud and more loud the tempest raves,
 In thunder break the mountain waves,
 White-foaming, on the rock.
 No ship that ever swept the deep
 Its ribs of gnarled oak could keep
 Unshattered by the shock.

SCHILLER.

WHEN it suited his humour, few men could be more agreeable than Temple; and, seeing it was expedient for the further prosecution of his designs to propitiate Galofaro, he managed in a short time to gain a kind of probationary footing in the smuggler's estimation: but his confidence?—no, not that just yet. Galofaro kept his eye on him as a croupier watches the moves of a suspected gambler, whom, if detected in foul play, punishment follows with no limping foot. A fight for life and a blow beneath the belt would have been the instant result of a false move on Temple's part; but, although he seemed to be well aware of his position, he comported himself with the nonchalance of a man utterly heedless of danger.

Sometimes, it is true, when the demon of suspicion and jealousy, roused from his temporary

lullment, sat, toad-like, on Galofaro's shoulder, and darted his venom into the smuggler's ear, Temple would look up suddenly and catch an expression in his wild, restless eye that made him feel anything but comfortable; but Agnese was at hand, and a word or a glance from her instantly dispelled the vapour, and brought the sun out in full vigour on his soul again.

The writhings of Galofaro's spirit might be compared to the contortions of the vast python, when Waterton took him by the throat in his hollow-tree den. If the great naturalist had thrown away the glimmer of a chance he would have been instantly crushed into the compass of a mummy; and such Temple knew would be his fate if he exhibited the slightest symptom of vacillation or dishonesty of purpose in Galofaro's presence. So, looking to the caps of his revolver, he carried a bold front, and acted with the wariness and caution of a man who has to do with a deadly enemy.

Nominally, Temple lived at Ajaccio; but virtually, his whole time was passed in a state of oscillation between that city and the Val-dell'Orco. He went and he came at all hours; and if the Grotta had been the Union Club at Oxford he could not have entered it with more freedom or less ceremony.

While he was thus daily basking in the beams

of Agnese's love the thought at length occurred to him that he would write to Pendril, and inquire when and how he meant to return to England, in order that his own course might be shaped accordingly. His letter ran thus :—

“DEAR PENDRIL,

“You will not, I hope, be vexed to hear that the honour and glory of killing a mouflon is no longer the chief object of *my* ambition ; nor that I have made up my mind, under present circumstances, to decline the further pursuit of that animal. I should be glad, however, to know that you are enjoying a double share of sport—your own and mine as well ; but if Diana do not smile on you, her chief craftsman—you who have outdone Demetrius in the fervour of your devotion—I recommend you to give her up and take to other shrines.

“I am now up to my hocks in clover ; and were it not that the old fellow, who is now at home, looks as if he might be dangerous, the run would be perfect. He is, however, civil, and has not, as yet, asked any pointed questions on the subject of my future plans. Do you remember what old Sam Weller, the livery-stable keeper at Oxford, said to Courtenay, when he came poking his nose too frequently into Sam's stables—not to look at his clever hunters, but

after his charming daughter?—‘I’ll tell you what, Mr. Courtenay; there is but one road to my daughter’s affections, sir, and that’s by the halter!’—a bit of information that Courtenay did not seem to value, for he instantly told him to go and be hanged with his halter. Well, the old fellow has not come to that point yet; but he looks as if he might do so at a moment’s notice.

“If you do not intend to hybernize with the mouflon, let me know the day on which you return to England, as at Oxford I must be by the 20th of October.

“My degree looms drearily ahead, and gives me the nightmare in my dreams. I begin to think that Robinson, the Christ Church Gentleman Commoner, was right when he said, ‘If the Latin and Greek languages are dead languages, why the devil don’t they bury them?’

“My father vows he’ll cut me off with a shilling (not that he has many to give to any one), and my uncle, Sir Frederick, that he’ll sell the next presentation to Lydcot if I get shaved again: so at Michaelmas it will be either a coronet or Westminster Abbey; B.A. or the backwoods of America.

“I have nothing more to add, except that I hope you will not kill Tennyson with hard work, nor get killed yourself by the brigands, which I

see, by the *Ajaccio Journal*, are in strong force in the gorge of the Restonica at the present time.

“Yours ever,

“GODFREY TEMPLE.”

“A cool fish, I must confess!” said Pendril, aghast at the utter absence of right feeling and good fellowship indicated by the letter. “If he does not soon come to grief it will not be his fault: that’s evident.”

“He certainly seems to be on the high road to ruin,” replied Tennyson, without mincing the matter. “I like to see a young man as full of spirit as a sparrowhawk; but, if underneath he is not supported by a good principle, he lacks that which can alone keep him straight in life.”

“Godfrey Temple,” said Pendril, “has been brought up at the very feet of Gamaliel: no pains have been spared in his education, at home or at school, that could contribute to form the character of a high-class Christian gentleman. And if, after such a training, he goes wrong, a sceptic would maintain that the rules of even an inspired writer were liable to their exceptions; and that the sapling, be it planted in ever so straight and upright a direction, would yet become a crooked and ungainly tree.”

If the quality of a man's heart is discernible in his letters, as that of a language is by its lyrics, Pendril would have been more than mortal if he had not felt and expressed intense disgust at the selfish, flippant, and sneering style of that epistle. But his feelings were scarcely less shocked by the off-hand and unprincipled recklessness with which Temple alluded to his present questionable position than they were by the disregard he showed for his father's wishes in the important matter of his academical obligations.

"A more upright, single-hearted, good man than the rector of Goodwell does not breathe," said Pendril; "and if Godfrey, who is his only son, fails to obtain his degree, I verily believe it will bring down his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"Are there any daughters?" inquired Tennyson, wishing to hear something more of a family in whom Pendril seemed to take so great an interest.

"No less than four—'polished corners of the Temple,' as Harry Biggs very appropriately called them at the last hunt ball. It was an unfortunate turn of the wheel for those girls when Godfrey came into the world; and if at the time they did not think so, they have certainly ample cause for knowing it now. Cakes and ill-

conceived indulgences are the first stepping-stones to ruin; and these have been so lavished on Godfrey's childhood by all but his sensible old father, that, if the usual effect does not follow, it will be strange indeed. Then, the sacrifice of many home comforts for Godfrey's sake, that he might enjoy all the advantages of a gentleman's education, and succeed to the family living, have been submitted to with a cheerfulness worthy of all praise. "For instance," said Pendril, warming on the subject, "the family carriage has been suppressed for a one-horse chaise: Jones, the butler, born on the Temple estate, has gone to live with Brown the soapboiler, and a creaking parlour-maid now fills his place: invitations from the neighbourhood are regularly declined; and, worse than all, that hearty and joyous welcome with which the venerable rector was wont to greet his frequent guests is no longer heard on his lips. I own, when I see those self-denying retrenchments, and observe the spirit in which they are estimated by Godfrey Temple, I tremble at the return he is about to make for such a sacrifice, and at the effect it will probably produce on those good, kind folk at the rectory."

"Education at Oxford, then, must be very expensive, I apprehend?" said Tennyson.

"No," replied Pendril, "not at all: the

course of reading provided by the University in private and public lectures is not only not expensive, but is liberal and comprehensive enough to satisfy even a Gladstone. The accessories make the difference; and these, unfortunately, are under the control of the young men themselves. It matters not a button that the handsome allowance of three hundred pounds a year—wrung often from a slender exchequer—is made to the pupil, and that he is expected and bound by common honesty not to exceed that sum. In one puff the family compact is blown to the winds by the silver tongues of those who offer the tyro unlimited credit. The mode of catching the freshman in my day was simple enough:—After a scurry to Woodstock and Blenheim on an eight-shilling hack, which, as soon as his legs are warm, he rides over every fence between Somers Town and Blaydon Gate, he buys a pair of buckskin gloves at Miss Green's, returns to his stables, and at once tenders a sovereign in payment for the said ride. But 'the master is not in his office,' or 'the master has no change;' and he is politely told not to trouble himself on that score, for that his name and college are quite sufficient: those guarantees are then given, and from that day forth the young bird's claws, having touched the lime-twigs, are

more or less hampered for life. Oh! I could tell such tales of sorrow, connected with debt at Oxford, as would make the angels weep for pity! I have known men, highly bred, delicately nurtured, driven to a madhouse, and die there in a state of drivelling idiocy; others forced into exile and association with convicts who would have murdered them, had they known it, for being less base than themselves; and others who have yet managed to maintain their position in society, but have gone down to the grave prematurely, with a millstone of debt chained to their necks. I am told, however, that the passage through the Oxford Straits into the wide, wide sea beyond, is no longer so dangerous as it was when Wellington was consul; that the rocks and shoals are buoyed and lighted; and that a better look-out is now kept by the men at the helm. Thank God! if it be so; every English gentleman will hail the improvement with unqualified gratitude. But, to return to the Temples. Godfrey, I know, is no judge of pace, and has been going so fast of late that a break-down is more than probable; and if so, as he says, the backwoods may literally be his refuge."

"This letter of his, at all events, releases us from further detention on his account," said Tennyson, who was anxious to change their

hunting-ground, and to divert Pendril from the gloomy train of thought into which he had lately wandered.

"Of course it does ; and we cannot do better than take Brando's advice, and encamp for a few days on the Grosso ; he, at least, will never rest till Wildfire has been fairly slipped at the great mouflon."

Before, however, they could strike their tents, it was absolutely necessary that Madame Fióre should be consulted, lest the conveyance of provisions to the southern slopes of Le Niolo should be deemed impracticable by that lady. So, when Pendril strolled over to the goatherd's to inquire for a messenger, he was not a little amused to hear every man, woman, and child amongst them volunteer at once for the post. Pendril, however, soon made his selection, and pitched upon the patriarch of the family, a man sixty years of age, but strong, active, and well acquainted with the route, to convey his note to Corte. Accordingly, an hour before daylight on the following morning, and before the herds had gone to their pasture, the mountaineer was ready ; a sup of goat's milk and a lump of hard chest-nut-bread had satisfied his simple wants, and on this food he went on his way rejoicing. And again, long before the sun had disappeared behind

the dark woods of the Tavignano, the messenger had returned, bringing Pendril word from Madame Fióre that, go where he would, she would take care food should follow him, on alternate days, to any given spot in the mountains of Corsica.

"A thorough trump, that woman!" said Pendril, unmistakeably pleased with her readiness to meet his demand: "we can't be far wrong in the hands of such a commissary."

Hitherto the weather had been clear and glorious, but the fine, refreshing breeze that blew so steadily from the north, and cooled down the still powerful rays of the sun, had for the last few days been gradually dying away; then followed for some hours a still, sickly sultriness that, even in that high region, the hunters found most oppressive; the landscape around seemed to quiver under its influence.

"Exactly the kind of weather that precedes a tornado in the East," said Tennyson, around whose head a thin wreath of blue tobacco-smoke from his pipe was curling and lingering, as if the air had no power to disperse it.

"Ay! and we shall have it soon," replied Pendril, observing a mass of black cloud rolling up from the southward.

The goatherds had seen the sign, and had

returned to the *bergeria*, as their cluster of cabins was called, an hour before their accustomed time.

"Look to the tent-pegs, Piero, before that storm reaches us; for if it finds a weak point, we shall be uprooted to a certainty."

"All are as secure as we can make them," replied the piqueur; "but the soil is loose, and the tents are not pitched on 'vantage-ground, so they will be exposed to the full brunt of the storm; and a storm in these hills is no joke, I'll assure you."

A few large drops, the precursors of the coming deluge, fell heavily on the tent; then a gust of wind whirled by, as if it had just escaped from the caverns of *Æolus*. Will and Piero had only time to support the pegs on the windward side of Pendril's tent with two massive blocks of granite, when night descended upon them like a shroud, sudden and dark as *Erebus*; and this was instantly followed by a fierce shower of hail-stones, big as bullets, which drove the two men before it like chaff before the wind.

"What can we do with the Corporal," said Will, as he entered the tent for shelter. "There lies the poor little fellow on the sward below, tethered in the very teeth of the tempest: if he was made of marble he'd suffer in such a night as this."

"Take him up, Will, and tether him to leeward of this tent: there, at least, he will not be so exposed."

Will, though he hastened at once to fulfil the order, was not, however, altogether satisfied with it. He believed not only that the shelter would be insufficient, but that the rattling of the ropes and canvas in the pony's face would drive him wild with fear; so, instead of fixing him on the outside, he lashed him to the pole inside his own tent.

Already the small space, intended originally for one person, was so well occupied by Will, Piero, and the four dogs, two of them standing above twenty-six inches high at the shoulder, that bare room could be found for the additional inmate. "It's a tight fit, your honour," said Will, as he reported the arrangement to his master; "but after all it's a small family party compared with what we've seen in a Brittany peasant's cabin, in which a long-legged, roach-backed pig is generally the master of the house."

"True, Will; if the peasant did not secure his cow, horse, sheep, and pig in the same cabin with himself, the wolves would get at them on the first night of snow; and even then, as you know, a blazing fire is often necessary to secure them from forcing an entrance."

At that moment a terrible flash of lightning and a clap of thunder burst over their heads almost simultaneously. Will staggered back as if he had been hit, and groped about for some seconds before his powers of vision again returned. The shock, however, was a slight one, and soon passed off; but Pendril, deeming it advisable to accompany the henchman to his tent, although it was scarcely twenty yards apart from his own, pretended to be curious to see how so large a party could be stowed away in so small a compass.

A few hasty strides brought them to the spot; but, before they could enter, cries of alarm from Piero, as if in mortal struggle, rose above the storm. "Help! help!" he shouted wildly, as in vain he strove to pacify the Corporal, and prevent his dragging the pole, tent, and all, down upon his head.

There stood the pony, utterly terrified by the vivid flash and peal of thunder, trembling like an aspen-leaf, and dragging at the halter till he was all but strangled; while Piero was clutching at the pole with the desperation of a man who is clinging to his last plank.

In an instant Will severed the rope with his knife, close to the pole, by which Piero and the pony were at once relieved; but the ears of the

latter lying flat backwards, and his tail tucked tightly between his legs clearly indicated more mischief.

"Take up his near fore-leg, Will," said Pendril, "while I talk to him: the human voice has often more power over a beast than mere brute force."

But fear, once excited in a horse, is not so easily allayed. Pendril stroked his nose, hand-rubbed his ears, and breathed into his nostrils, after the fashion of the Irish Whisperer; and he talked to him with that kind of gentle, assuasive tone that a woman uses in soothing a child to rest.

But all in vain; again the electric flash glared in the tent, and the thunder burst at the same time with such terrific violence overhead that the Corporal at once became ungovernable. Twice he reared straight on end, and, as Piero made a grab at the halter, the pony fell back heavily on Pendril, and rolled completely over him. Then, in attempting to recover himself, he managed so to kick his hind-legs under the canvas, that to rise, without doing serious injury to the tent, was impossible.

The great Duke of Wellington, who had seen every kind of row from an extempore street-mill to a general action, jokingly expressed a desire to

see a fight in a crowded omnibus ; "for," said he, "with the glass up it would be the climax of confusion."

The interior of that tent was certainly no model of peace and order : for, during the struggle, the swing-lamp and all the small stock of crockery had been shattered to pieces ; the dogs had been kicked and trampled upon, and were crouching together on Will's pallet, lifting up a loud and dissonant protest against the dangerous row. Charon alone pricked up his ears, and, had it not been for Will's coercion, would have certainly done battle in his master's behalf when he saw him thus hurled to the ground.

"Throw yourself across the pony's head, Piero," said Pendril, picking himself up as he best could. The ancient piqueur, however, preferring the storm on the outside to that within, had rushed off, as he afterwards explained, to obtain a light from the adjoining tent : but he certainly took a long time to get one, and did not again appear at the front till the fray was at an end.

Pendril, unaided, and in the dark, was now no match for the Corporal ; for, before he could catch him by the head, the terrified brute, having gained his legs, made a desperate plunge forwards, and brought down the frail structure,

pole and all, to the ground. He then dashed forth into the storm, uttering a piercing scream, such as is only heard from a horse in his agony.

In one instant the hurricane seized upon the tent, and, turning it inside out, like an inverted umbrella, released Pendril and his companions from the ruins under which they lay; and in a minute more the tent would have followed the pony, or been torn to shreds, if the four strong men had not fastened upon it simultaneously, and with great exertion pinned it to the earth.

A more ghastly night to be abroad in could scarcely be conceived; the rain, mingled with hail, absolutely hissed with fury, and in a few minutes drove the hunters and dogs, half-stifled and thoroughly drenched, to the welcome refuge of the neighbouring tent. Dry clothing, however, a few good cigars, and a liberal supply of brandy and water, soon did their work of restoration; the dogs, coiled together in one heap, were again whimpering in their dreams; and although Will and Piero were stretched on the bare floor, one laying his head on the saddle and the other on the saddle-bags, they speedily announced, by unmistakeable sounds, that they, too, had entered* the double gates of sleep and oblivion.

"We shall never see the Corporal again," said

* *Sunt geminæ somni portæ.*

Tennyson; "if he holds on at the pace he started he must inevitably come to grief soon."

"I have no fears on that score," said Pendril; "he is mountain-bred, and as safe as a cat upon his legs; and, if I am not much mistaken, by daylight he will be back again at Ajaccio. I can well remember how poor John Dare lost his horse after a run over the Western moors with the Palmerston hounds.

"The day had been a stormy one, and John, having acted in the double capacity of huntsman and whip, was returning to his distant kennels, somewhat beaten and dispirited by a long and a bad day's sport. Unfortunately for him, he was tempted by an enemy to halt on the road and imbibe sundry *petits verres* of liquid fire by way of comforting his depressed soul. Alas! the draught administered to Crassus was scarcely less fatal in its effects; his horse and hounds at the gate were in a short time as utterly forgotten as if John had wetted his clay with Lethean drinks instead of the waters of life. After a short stupor, however, as the sun succeeds to night, John rose again, jolly and jovial as a satyr, and, reeling forth, was not a little staggered to find horse and hounds gone. But whither gone?—that was the question which no one could answer. So this high priest of Diana's, in full

canonicals, had to trudge toe and heel disconsolately homewards. He reached the kennels one hour after midnight, and found the hounds fed and asleep on their benches, and the stableman in a transport of rage at being kept six hours waiting in vain for Paganini's return. I believe a whole week elapsed before the steed was recovered, and then he was traced to the Moor Farm, thirty miles off, on which, twelve years before, he had been foaled and bred. He was found, without saddle or bridle, rejoicing in his liberty among a herd of ponies, wild as the winds of their native moors; and it took a whole week to catch him."

"Then, in that case," said Tennyson, "if the vultures don't find him with his neck broken, we may possibly hear of the Corporal again."

For seven days and nights the alternations of rain, hail, and mighty rushing winds never ceased for an instant; nevertheless, the General's tent stood its ground bravely; and, although neither sun nor stars made their appearance during the whole of that period, the basket of provisions from Corte never failed to do so on each successive morn. To follow the chase was an impossibility; and, as there was no game to be obtained without doing so, Madame Fiore's punctuality enabled the hunters to feel that so

long as there was corn in Egypt they were sure of their supply. So they rode out the storm, well found, if not in comfort, to its very last puff.

When the rage and violence of the elements had been fairly expended, the weather again became gloriously fine, yet far fresher and colder than it had been before the storm. The autumnal air, at the considerable elevation of six thousand feet above the level of the sea, and in the immediate region of perpetual snow, brought at break of day frost on its wings, while, an hour or two afterwards, the sun played forth on the hills apparently in full and undiminished vigour. The rarefaction of the air, too, was such that, if the hunters' constitutions had not been of the robust order, their lungs must have suffered from its influence, especially as their pores were so frequently opened by hard exercise, and they took little or no pains to protect themselves against the searching, icy breeze, to which they were so constantly exposed.

The goatherds were in despair at the prospect of losing neighbours from whom they had received so many tokens of good feeling and substantial kindness; and it was quite touching to observe the regret manifested on all sides by these simple people when the day of the hunters'

departure at length arrived. Never did labourers, by nature so lethargic and inert, exert themselves more readily, or do better service, as porters, than the goatherds and their wives on this occasion; and had the quantity of luggage been four times as great and cumbrous as it was, no horse nor mule would have been required to transport it to the most distant part of that mountain region.

With the exception of two women, one of whom waited to guide Madame Fióre's men forward, and the other to attend the flocks, the whole population of the bergeria turned out *en masse* to accompany the hunters as far as the Grosso river; and nothing Pendril could say to induce even the children to remain behind was of the slightest avail. The little party of travellers, laden as they were with poles, portman-teaus, and the paraphernalia of the tents, jogged along over the rugged and trackless heights at a marvellous pace; and although camels and asses were wanting to complete the patriarchal scene, they looked for all the world like a tribe of nomads seeking a change of home.

CHAPTER XI.

Magnificent creature ! so stately and bright !
 In the pride of thy spirit pursuing thy flight.
 For what hath the child of the desert to dread
 Wafting up his own mountains that far-beaming head,
 Or borne, like a whirlwind, down on the vale ?
 Hail ! king of the wild and the beautiful ! hail !

WILSON.

PASSING on between the Lac de Pinosa and that of Creno, the hunters pointed for a ridge of land which, running due north and south, seemed to be, from its lofty and serrated conformation, the backbone of the island, and from which numerous spurs, like so many ribs, forming the valleys of the Gravone, the Liamone, and the Grosso, descended in a westerly direction abruptly to the sea. At the head of the last of these they came to a halt ; and on a small terrace of level ground overhanging the Bocca di Manganello, and commanding a glorious view of the Mediterranean Sea in the distance, they pitched their tents. The spot was one of extreme desolation—far more so than that of the bergeria ; not a trace of vegetation could be seen between it and the neighbouring forest, and huge

pillars of granite rose high in the air, like giants scowling on the softer scene below. If herbage had ever risen to the surface of this arid soil it had long since disappeared, withered and burnt, as on a funeral pile. Yet it was the centre of the mouflon country ; and on that account, if for no other reason, it had charms unspeakable for Pendril and his friend.

"I can't conceive a grander site for a hunting-box," said the former, in raptures with the scene ; "and if the country continues to be as well stocked as Brando represents it to be, I should like to spend every autumn of my life on this wild spot."

"Ay !" said Tennyson, in a tone of assumed irony ; "and you'd bring a host of friends with you, and soon destroy the privacy which is now its chief characteristic : just as, according to your own account, the romantic glens of the Trosachs have been flooded by a stream of tourists, whose very presence is incompatible with that of the eagle and the wild dun-deer."

"Man is a social animal, Tennyson, and never, I believe, enjoys sport so much as when he shares it with a friend. This is the prime feature of fox-hunting : it is at once the manliest, the most exciting, and the least selfish of sports. The quiet, cozy charm of the cover side, and the thrilling fire of the chase, which, after a

glorious blaze in the field, lights up the mahogany at night with undiminished effect, impart social delights such as no other sport can show. So, rob me of good company, and you rob me of half my enjoyment."

That night a message, conveyed by the returning goatherds, brought Brando to the tents; and right pleasant to the hunters' ears was the loud, hearty greeting with which the braconnier welcomed their arrival on that side of the hills. After a short but lively conversation on monks, mouflon, and gendarmes, it was determined to devote the following day to the chase of the great mouflon alone. Wildfire, according to Will's account, had never been in better form; his diet had been carefully attended to; and every day, during the prevalence of the equinoctial gales, he had been well exercised by accompanying the henchman on his long but vain rambles in search of the missing pony.

"What on earth shall we do with Brando for the night?" whispered Pendril, as the braconnier, seated on the ground, was eating his supper and quaffing Vico wine as if he had tasted neither meat nor drink for a whole week. "He talks of taking the field at daylight, and of course will not return at this late hour to his own home; hardy as he is, I should be sorry to let him roost *sub Jove frigido* on a granite bed—

and that, too, necessarily a damp one, after the recent heavy rain."

"His own plans for the night are, I dare say, formed," replied Tennyson; "and when he has finished his meal, we shall probably hear what they are."

Brando's thoughts, however, were clogged by no difficulties; he had so often laid down his head and slept the sleep of an infant on the bare, rugged bosom of his mother earth, that it was a matter of supreme indifference to him whether the plank was a hard or a soft one on which he took his rest. If on a wild night he found it necessary to bivouac in the open, the only shelter he sought was that of a projecting rock, to leeward of which he lay, heedless of the passing storm—just as a salmon in a strong stream lies quietly with his nose against a stone, while the current rushes furiously by, without disturbing his rest. When the braconnier's appetite had been fully satisfied—

— *Expletus dabibus ; vinoque sepultus,
Cervicem inflexam posuit, jacuitque per antrum
Immensus :—*

he cast himself at full length on the floor of the tent, and there, enveloped in his goat-skin attire, he soon fell into a long, deep, sonorous sleep,

such as they only know who have full skins and a light conscience.

"One can imagine Prometheus on his back, *saniem eructans*," said Tennyson, as Brando lay stretched on the ground, overcome with wine and sleep, and occupying a Cyclopean share of the space on which the tent stood.

"Ay!" said Pendril, "if that huge mastiff were not in such close propinquity, lying at his side with half-closed eyes, and guarding him with such watchful care. The giant, depend upon it, never had such a friend as that at his elbow."

"Probably not, or Ulysses could not have so easily gouged him," replied Tennyson; "the brute is certainly a grand one, and reminds me of Alcibiades' dog, as he lies, sculptured in half-recumbent form, in the inner vestibule of the Uffizi Gallery.

The next morn, before break of day, and before the fox had ceased to bark in the hollow fell below, it needed no blast of the horn to rouse the hunters from their light sleep, and to remind them of the attractive sport awaiting them on the Grosso. Brando and Argus, as he appropriately called his faithful comrade, had already strolled from the tent; the braconnier, however, had left his long fowling-piece behind, and had merely gone forth to ascertain the quarter from which the wind was blowing—a preliminary observation which the

experienced mouflon-hunter took care never to neglect.

Again, at breakfast, Brando took in a vast supply of provisions, paying compliments to Madame Fióre's skill which would have certainly brought the damask into that lady's cheek, had she been there to hear them.

"A widow, is she—and good-looking, too? Then, by St. Hubert, I'll marry her!"

"But you must first woo her, and then gain her consent, Brando, before that happy result can take place," said Pendril.

"Not a bit of it; a maid may require the slow process of a regular siege, but a widow is best carried by a *coup de main*—at least, so my friends at St. Martino say; and they are no mean judges of woman's ways."

"On the principle, I conclude," said Tennyson, "that a looker-on sees more of the game than the player himself?—and because that privileged class to which your friends belong are licensed to lift the dark veil that conceals our infirmities from profane eyes, and to take private peeps into the recesses of the human heart?"

"Of woman's in particular," said Brando; "for, as they are the weaker vessels, so they chiefly yield to influences which the stronger nature of man is better able to resist."

"True," replied Tennyson; "but in married life the husband confides in the wife, and the wife in a third person; and this gives that person knowledge and power over both. Samson was guilty of this mistake, and immediately suffered physical blindness and slavery — the identical moral penalty which they pay who commit themselves to man and not to God."

Will's presence, with Wildfire at his heels, brought the breakfast and conversation abruptly to a close; for, the moment Brando caught sight of the hound, the pleasant vision of domestic comfort which he had so boldly conceived vanished like a morning dream from his thoughts. Diana came to the rescue, and the obliteration of the widow was, for the time, complete.

On the north-west side of the tents, stretching away as far as the eye could reach, lay a broad expanse of open moorland, destitute, apparently, of all vegetation, and less broken by rock and gully than the surrounding land. To this waste the hunters, under the guidance of Brando, first directed their steps. The braconnier, full of hope and in high feather, pointed out the exact spot on which he had last seen the great mouflon, and, expatiating with pardonable minuteness on the long range at which he was compelled to fire, attributed his want of success to the great difficulty of approaching so wild and watchful an

animal in such open ground. "If there's an eagle in the air," said he, "the mouflon can tell by his movements whether the country is safe around him; and the least variation in the ordinary tone of the raven's note attracts his attention and warns him of approaching danger."

This the hunters found to be really the case; not that telegraphic signals are established between the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field for their mutual protection, but that the instinct of the shy mouflon leads him to keep an ever-watchful eye on all animals that come within his ken, and to discover, in the peculiarity of their cry or movements, the approach of an enemy, especially of man. The mere twitter of a mountain finch, as he flitted across their path on a jerking wing, was alone sufficient to attract the wary animal's notice and excite his suspicions, as Pendril, on more than one occasion, found to his cost.

For at least three hours they had tramped over this desolate reach, examining with a keen scrutiny the heads and hollows of several glens, without discovering the slightest trace of the great mouflon. The long serrated ridge on their right was also swept with equal care and result; and here and there small herds, chiefly of dams and their young, were seen resting on the summit of isolated rocks, the approach to which, without

being seen, was next to an impossibility. These in every instance were left undisturbed ; Brando pronouncing positively that the object of the chase was not among them, and that every herd on the Grosso plain would be set in motion if they were pursued.

Not a track was visible on the bare, stony ground by which the hunters could judge of the probable direction the animal had taken when he had last crossed this wilderness ; nor, indeed, would the land have betrayed the hoof-marks of a herd of buffaloes, had they stampeded over its surface that very morning : so that clue to his whereabouts there was none.

" At all events," said Brando, in a tone of undisguisable impatience, " these are the devil's head-quarters ; and here, within a league or two, I have seen him, hoof and horn, at least a score of times."

" It don't suit him to be visible just now," said Pendril. " Perhaps your alliance with the monks of St. Martino has alarmed him, and he has a shrewd notion, if he fall into their hands, they will add insult to injury—roast him first, and say grace over him afterwards."

" That would only be half his penalty ; they'd drown him into the bargain," said the braconnier, carrying on the joke, and giving a proof of his Milesian origin which the

Heralds' College would have deemed unquestionable.

Fifty times that morning had Pendril's telescope been passed from one hand to another, as each hunter in his turn fondly imagined he had at length discovered the Chief of le Niolo ; but the object invariably turned out to be either a block of light-coloured granite or the bole of a stunted beech tree that, by some mischance, had ventured into existence in a zone and soil unsuitable even to its hardy nature.

Mid-day had now arrived, and six leagues of mountain land had been thus far traversed in vain, when Pendril, whose hope never flagged, and who had always a cheery word ready at the moment it was most needed, shouted to Will to unbuckle his knapsack and draw a cover which, thanks to the widow, they never drew blank. "The luck of the day," said he, "generally changes at lunch-time ; so the sooner we fall to the better will be our chance of sport in the afternoon."

Will's belief in his master's doctrine was unbounded ; and although the prospect of a quick and sure find in the well-stocked cover at his back probably sharpened his alacrity in drawing it, yet, so truly did he love the chase, that he would have gone without his dinner for a whole

month, cheerfully and gladly, to catch one glimpse of the great mouflon's horns. His qualms respecting Wildfire and that animal had long ceased, and he had now arrived at the conviction that there was no truer nor wilder game on the face of the earth than the mouflon of that mountain land.

The luncheon was no sooner spread than despatched; and while the hunters yet lingered to light their pipes and enjoy the sedative and soothing influence that good tobacco imparts to the nerves, Will had sprung on his legs, and pointing in the direction of Monte Cinto, towards which he had been intently gazing for some minutes, exclaimed, "If ever I viewed a fox in my life I do now. Yonder he goes, as bright as a new guinea!"

"Tush, Will!" said Pendril, whose expectation had been suddenly excited; "I could have sworn you had seen something better worth looking at."

"That I never shall, your honour; a fox always makes my heart jump, view him where I will. 'Tis but a little animal, but there is nothing like him for true sport; and that I'm pretty sure your honour thinks."

"No doubt; but we want the great mouflon just now; and this is not exactly the sort of coun-

try in which one cares to see a fox, simply because you can't follow him over it. But, talking of country," said Pendril, addressing himself to Tennyson, "I remember hearing a strange story told respecting the miscomprehension of that word. An English squire of the old school, living on the borders of a fine open country called the Penbarrow Moors, after a long life devoted entirely to fox-hunting, found himself one day suddenly summoned by the King of Terrors, or, in his own words, 'going to ground before he was beat in the field.' A remarkable animal, styled 'the white-faced mare,' had carried him gloriously to hounds, and, in the delirium that preceded his decease, her merits seemed to form the sole subject of his conversation and thoughts. A neighbouring clergyman, hearing of the serious state of his body and soul, hastened to his bedside, and earnestly implored him to fix his hope on a better country.

" 'A better country, sir!' said the dying man, starting up in his bed, 'why this is a beautiful country! Give me the white-faced mare and a thousand a year, and I'd never wish to see a better.' "

"Of course the clergyman explained?" inquired Tennyson.

"No, he had no time for that. The sick man

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sent for his groom, and gave him orders to dress him in his top-boots, breeches, and pink; then taking his arm, in spite of all remonstrances, he descended to a settle by the kitchen fire, called for his pipe, and died smoking it."

"A literal case of *exit in fumo*," observed Tennyson.

"Ay! so thought the clergyman; for he shook his head, and said, solemnly, 'Verily life is a vapour.'"

Brando, who had been manifesting some impatience at the long-winded story he had just heard, waved his hand towards a group of ragged mounds which, in the distance, looked like a cluster of gigantic mole-hills, and expressed a wish to draw that ground before they turned to the ridge on their homeward route; so they bent their steps at once in that direction. "That's a capital cover in rough weather," said he, "especially if the wind's in the west; but it is quite unapproachable from every quarter—at least within gun-shot."

"And for that reason," said Pendril, "one would expect to find a shy old mouflon always at home in so safe a harbour."

They were now within half a league of the ground, and as the atmosphere was extremely dry and clear, the movement of an animal of far less

size than a mouflon could not have escaped detection at that distance, even with the naked eye. Wildfire, however, carried his head high, as if in gazing attitude, and pricked up his ears towards the mounds with more than usual vivacity. The braconnier's dog, too, at the same time required a rough hint to keep him in the rear; but, in spite of that and sundry uncomplimentary allusions to his parentage, the ardour of the brute was not to be restrained: so Brando took out a leash and bound him to his waist.

Who, after a long morning, has not eyed with delight an improvement in the manner of hounds as they draw near a cover in which they expect to find? The quicksilver mounts almost visibly in their veins; how gay is their action, and how unequivocal and expressive is its meaning, as, heedless of the spiny brake, they dash into it, through it, and over it in search of the expected game! Not a word is said, not a sound uttered; yet the houndsman knows from the foregoing signals, the truest of all telegrams, that the prophecy of a blank day, croaked forth by some desponding bird of ill omen, is not likely to be fulfilled; and in another moment joy fills his heart, as the whimper of Vestris tingles on his ear. "Have at him, my lass!" rings from his lips. "He's up, for a thousand!"

"Gently, Wildfire," said Will, as he stroked the fine silky ear of the hound, now stalking at his side on the very tiptoe of expectation ; "gently, my boy, or you'll be half beaten before the fray begins."

There could be no doubt, from the action of the two dogs, that they had crossed fresh scent ; and, as the hillocks in front appeared to be the only ground in which a herd of mouflon could be harboured without being seen, the sagacious brutes had evidently set their hearts on finding the game in that cover. Nor were they doomed to long suspense ; for Brando, suddenly snatching the glass from Pendril's hand, applied it to his eye, and, uttering a kind of short howl, strangely expressive of joy, exclaimed, "If I don't see the horns of the great mouflon, I'll ride to — on a pig's back ! But," continued he, in a more subdued tone, "how on earth are we to get at him, so as to give the hound a fair start ?"

The position occupied by the herd, and especially by the leader of it, commanded the plain on all sides ; but to the right of the spot on which the hunters were gathered, a single mound, scarcely so high as a man's head, stood, like a solitary sentinel, at a distance of two or three hundred yards from the chief cluster, and under that

cover, it was just possible to approach so near without disturbing the game. The operation required no little skill ; not only on account of the bare open ground and the shy habits of the great mouflon, but because the direction of the wind was not sufficiently favourable to warrant its probable success.

Pendril however, undertook the delicate task ; and while the others were falling back in order to execute a circular movement, and to show themselves on the opposite side of the mounds, he and Wildfire stole off towards the ambush, now crawling on all-fours, and now crouching to the very earth, as if life itself depended on the caution with which they advanced. And so it did—the life of the Chief of le Niolo ; the wariest, the wildest, and the heaviest mouflon in all Corsica. But the remainder of the story had better be told in Pendril's own words : “ I had scarcely crept a hundred yards in this fashion,” said he, “ when I lay on my chest and took a good look at the game in front. I could count three fine full-grown mouflon ; one of which, from his superior size and enormous horns, was evidently the object of our chase. All were in recumbent positions, and each occupied the apex of a separate little pyramid, from which danger could be seen afar. But as yet

they were in a state of perfect repose ; inasmuch that a stranger to the animal's habits might have mistaken them for so many stone sphinxes, forming classic but grotesque capitals to the rude columns on which they were placed. I then advanced stealthily on, keeping my eye upon them the whole time, until I had gained safe ground and placed myself fairly behind the intervening hillock.

"Alas ! when I had thus reached this point, and was taking another peep through the chinks of a cracked boulder, a flight of plover whizzed by me with such a clatter that I made sure the mouflon would discover my retreat and at once break away in an opposite direction. For some seconds I dared not move a muscle, knowing that the whole attention of the herd would be concentrated on the spot in which I lay. At length—for seconds seemed hours—I again raised my head very cautiously, and as I brought my eye to a cleft groove, I was startled by a sight that even now quickens my pulse when I think of it. Every mound was crowned with a living mouflon, erect, gazing, and prepared for flight ; and amongst them all, a dozen or more, the great mouflon was eminently conspicuous : a magnificent wild animal, towering above his fellows as Rotondo over the lesser hills.

“ In an instant, however, I had the satisfaction of seeing the whole herd wheel round, like so many girouettes, and fix their attention earnestly on a different point. Of course they were looking at my companions, of whose position I could form a pretty accurate judgment by the fixed gaze with which the mouflon stared in that direction. The chance of immediate sport now fired my veins, and I could scarcely suppress my feelings as Wildfire, trembling with nervous impatience, looked up in my face, as much as to inquire, ‘ How much longer ? ’ No Napier that ever was born, said I to myself, could claim a better title to the motto ‘ Ready, ay Ready ’ than thou canst, my brave hound ; and I laid my hand on his head to express a sympathy which I dared not utter in words.

“ A loud shout in the distance now caught the hound’s ears as well as my own ; and at the same moment every mouflon bounded from his pinnacle to the plain, like swallows quitting a house-top on an autumn day. On they came, in headlong hurry, direct for the mound under which I lay. I could hear their hoo’s rattling against the stones. Wildfire became frantic, and, in spite of my arm which I threw round his neck, dashed straight at the leading mouflon, met him almost at right angles, and struck boldly at his

throat. By some mischance, or rather, perhaps, by being in too great a hurry, the hound missed his mark, came into collision, and fell heavily on the plain. In one instant the whole herd pelted by him like a storm of hail, the great mouflon himself being the last of the ruck ; but in another, Wildfire was on his legs again, dashing after him, and cleaving the air like a jer-falcon in pursuit of his prey.

“The long, even, and vigorous stride of the hound soon brought him to the quarters of his game ; but ever as he reached the shoulder the beast bounded on one side, stopped short, and threw the hound yards beyond his mark. The rest of the herd had now gained a clear lead, and on the principle of the devil take the hindmost, speedily disappeared over the ridge above. The great mouflon, on the other hand, discovering the power and desperate character of his foe, turned downwards and endeavoured to reach the gorge below. I held my breath as I saw the hound strike at his neck and again and again miss his hold : the dexterity with which he shot on one side and escaped the seizure was perfectly marvellous, and I ceased to wonder at the stories told of his charmed life.

“Brando’s mastiff was now hurrying on as fast as his legs could bear him ; and, while I

began to tremble lest the honours of final victory, which my noble hound had all but already won, should be carried off by that gaunt brute, I saw Wildfire again strike at the mouflon, and this time with the most perfect success. The hound had taken him by the shoulder, and, struggling forwards a few paces, brought him heavily to the ground.

"I stopped and gave one frantic cheer to encourage the hound, though I doubt if he heard it. Tennyson and Brando, however, perched as they were on the top of the mounds just vacated by the mouflon, from which they commanded a capital view of the whole run, responded to it with intense effect.

"Before I could reach the scene of action, the struggles of the great mouflon had well-nigh ceased: Wildfire^d had never relaxed his hold on the shoulder, and Argus had him by the throat, eager for his life's blood, which, with one stroke of the knife, saturated the plain. I thought Brando would have gone mad with delight when he looked down on the noble beast that till now he had so often pursued in vain. He whooped over him, like a Red Indian; patted Wildfire on the back, and swore by St. Hubert the monks would canonize him. The hound, he said, had done what man could not do, and had gained

immortal glory by the deed. Finally, he insisted on bearing the game, in its then entire condition, on his own shoulders to the tent: but he staggered under the burden, and, if Will had not succoured him, the giant strength of the braconnier would have been unequal to the task. A grander pair of horns never graced a mouflon's head; and as for his haunches—one of which was sent to the monastery of St. Martino, and the other to General de Leseleuc—they weighed just thirty-two French pounds apiece, exactly six pounds heavier than the largest mouflon Brando had ever killed."

CHAPTER XII.

For time at last sets all things even—
 And if we do but watch the hour,
 There never yet was human power
 Which could evade, if unforgiven,
 The patient search and vigil long
 Of him who treasures up a wrong.

MAZEPPA.

FOR the next fortnight, daily, after the death of the grand mouflon, Pendril and Tennyson mounted the slopes of Le Niolo with the regularity of the sun. The rocky chain of La Cagnone, the summits of Monte Renoso and Monte Nino, as well as the numerous hollow gorges with which their sides are furrowed, were explored by the hunters with indefatigable zeal and industry; and almost every day a mouflon or two, and sometimes even more, fell to their guns or succumbed to Wildfire's superior pace and power. But, as the strongest appetite will turn from the dish that is too often repeated, so, lest the reader should feel certain qualms of satiety at the amount of mouflon blood shed by the hunters, and denounce them as butchers, he

will be spared a more minute description of that sport, at least for the present.

Up to this period, about the middle of October, the work and enjoyment of the chase among the dogs had devolved chiefly on Wildfire alone ; for, with the exception of the disastrous affair with the mouflon in the Valley of Rocks, and the glorious day with the otter in the Tavignano, Charon had literally done nothing. Hitherto Brando had dissuaded Pendril from striking his tent and descending, for the purpose of hunting the boar, into the deep chestnut forests with which the mountains are girdled, as with a belt, on all sides. The condition of the mouflon, however, was now beginning to fail. During the early part of each night, strange cries, like the moanings of a perturbed spirit, were heard on the hill-side ; and so fierce were the battles of the male mouflon that, according to Brando, it was no uncommon occurrence, at this season of the year, to find them so disabled by these encounters as to render them an easy prey to the goatherds and their dogs. Then, on the other hand, the chestnuts had been falling for a month past, and the boars were now improving daily on the sweet feast so abundantly provided for them by the surrounding woods. Accordingly, when Pendril proposed that on the following day they should abandon their present nomad life, and

settle for a while in the small village of Evisa, and thence pursue the game said to be so abundant in that district, the change met with unqualified approval from all the party. Even Brando, who, from his long and intimate acquaintance with the mouflon, had so far adopted their habits as to be only perfectly happy when he was scaling some mountain peak or serrated ridge in pursuit of that animal, acknowledged that a boar's head or chine would now be a far more acceptable present to the monks of St. Martino than the best mouflon the hills could produce.

Crossing Le Niolo in a north-westerly direction, and passing the lonely source of the river Sagone, a journey of ten hours, under the guidance of Brando, brought the hunters to Evisa, a small rude village on the brink of the forest of Aitone. Here, however, there was no smiling hostess to welcome the travellers to her comfortable hotel; nor could they discover even a café into which they could walk and obtain rest and refreshment for a single night. But, on the other hand, the villagers came forward and absolutely vied with each other for the honour of accommodating the strangers. One family stood at the door of their little mansion, and absolutely invited Pendril to enter and take possession, while they proposed returning to the

hut in the forest, in which they had squatted during the chestnut harvest. Another, named Renucci, consisting of a man and his two sons, friends of Brando's, seized the braconnier by each arm, and would have detained him forcibly in their stronghold ; but that hero had good reason, as Pendril soon discovered, for declining the hospitality thus pressed upon him. A vendetta feud had been raging between this family and another residing in the neighbouring hamlet of Soccia ; blood had been shed in streams, and several lives sacrificed on both sides ; but still with small hope of peace for either party so long as the sufferers from the original insult chose to consider themselves as not yet sufficiently avenged.

The house itself, a massive, semicircular building, the windows of which had been blocked up with masonry, looked more like a martello tower than an ordinary human habitation, and bore so many recent marks of rough usage in and around its lintel, that it scarcely needed the practised eye of Brando to detect its suspicious character.

"No, no," said the braconnier, shaking his head, significantly, "we keep our bullets for wild boar, and are not prepared for garrison duty just yet ; the chase requires good rest at night ; and that, it strikes me, it may be somewhat difficult to obtain under your roof."

But this pointed allusion to the dangers that beset their house served only to draw out and exhibit in its true light the undying spirit of revenge by which these men were governed.

"If we offer you hospitality, Brando, by heavens you shall have it; and if you and your friends occupy this house, those who would disturb it had better stay at home to look after their own, for at Soccia we mean to be before daybreak."

"And a pack of hell-hounds will be more welcome in that village than your people," said Brando, whose blood was beginning to surge at prospect of the deadly fray so near at hand. "Well, I hope you'll make short work of it: thrash them well, and then be better friends."

"Never," growled the vendetta chief, with a hideous Corsican curse, and an expression of countenance worthy of a panther; "never. So long as a single member of that race breathes, there can be no peace between us. No, no," he continued, "the wound is now too deep to be healed by aught save steel and fire."

While this conversation was going on between Brando and his friends, a small troop of gendarmes, suddenly emerging from the forest, entered the village within a few yards of them, and marching directly up, came to a halt in front of the house before which the hunters stood.

The leader, raising his hand to his cocked-hat, saluted Pendril and his party with marked courtesy; but instantly turning towards the elder of the Renucci, he demanded, in an impatient tone, that all the inmates of his house should at once present themselves at the street-door, in order that the building might be searched for arms proscribed by law.

A momentary gleam of defiance shot across the proud Corsican's face; but the rapid reflection that resistance would be useless coming to his aid, and being at the same time conscious that every stiletto and musket he possessed were securely hidden away in the unsearchable depths of the forest of Aitone, he assumed an air of utter indifference, and made way for the intruder.

"Enter by all means, captain," said he, "if you doubt our loyalty; there are no locks to impede your search, nor men to resist it."

Half-a-dozen troopers, at the command of their leader, then entered the house, and, after ransacking every nook and corner of it for the space of twenty minutes, returned with blank faces, minus their expected booty.

"Not even a bullet-mould nor a copper-cap in the barrack," said the foremost of the cocked-hat detectives.

"Is it possible?" replied the captain, who could ill conceal the disappointment he felt at the

result of this domiciliary visit; "then our information has been strangely incorrect."

"Doubtless," said the vendetta chief, with an air of injured innocence; "informers are first cousins to the father of lies, and have the same respect for truth as the devil himself. No wonder you have been deceived, captain."

The captain, however, who had already obtained abundant proof that the Renucci family had been long engaged in a deadly feud with the Filippini at Soccia, was not to be outwitted so easily.

"If there be any deception in the matter," said he, "it is you who have played the conjuror." And turning to his men, he commanded them to arrest the father and his two sons, and to bear them off to the castle at Corte for farther examination.

The Renucci, it was evident, were little prepared for this order; and, as it was executed with that rapidity characteristic of French soldiers, the men were seized and pinioned before they could offer the slightest resistance, and marched off, like prisoners of war, to the military capital. Before, however, they left the ground, the vendetta chief appealed to Brando, and again proposed that the hunters should occupy his house during their stay at Evisa: an offer for

which, under the altered circumstances of the case, the braconnier now expressed his unbounded thanks, and proceeded at once to take possession without further ceremony.

"That's the only way," said Tennyson, addressing Pendril, "to put an extinguisher on these flames: it requires an iron heel to stamp them out, or they burn and smoulder for years in the very vitals of the community. Ay, Vesuvius itself has scarcely wrought greater destruction among its foolhardy neighbours than those feuds have wrought for the inhabitants of this little island. The suppression of arms is next to impossible in this mountain region; but the parties known to be engaged in these internecine frays could always be reached by the strong arm of the law, and detained in custody until they learned to live at peace with their neighbours. The slightest provocation is sufficient for starting the ball: a sneer, a practical joke, and even a trifling jest, have not unfrequently led to broils of life-long duration; and any act assuming the form of an insult to honour, especially if a woman be the subject of it, is invariably followed by counter-acts of reprisal and revenge, pitiless and fatal as those of a wounded tiger. Every man, woman, and child throughout the commune of Evisa, like true

Corsicans, will hate the despotic government which thus interferes to protect them even against their own wishes ; but none who reflect on the amount of crime and bloodshed caused by these vendetta feuds will doubt that in seizing the principals the government very wisely exercises its parental authority, and takes the best means of suppressing an enormous social evil for the benefit of the whole community."

The next morning after this event the hunters, now reduced to their original number of four by the departure of Piero in charge of the general's tent, breakfasted at break of day, and cheerily sounded the vast French horn with which Tennyson waked up the sluggards of the village and roused the slumbering echoes of the woods hard by. That horn, by-the-by, forms no mean accessory to the business of the forest chasse, and no Frenchman can be considered an accomplished chasseur who does not understand the different signals given forth by its brazen tongue. The quality of the game afoot, whether it be wolf, boar, stag, fallow-deer, roebuck, fox, badger, or hare, is announced by a distinctive note ; and every chasseur who hears it, from the very depths perhaps of some mighty forest, can immediately tell whether hounds are running their legitimate game or not ; and thus fore-

warned he is able, if near, to encourage or rate them forthwith; to aid the chase or stop the riot. Then, if hounds run heel, change their game, break cover, or kill, no matter how extensive the forest or labyrinthine its avenues, no matter how scattered *the field* may be, the horns proclaim the various movements with no uncertain sound, and the chasseurs shape their course accordingly.

"That sound is very grateful to Charon's ears," said Pendril, as he observed the delight with which the hound lifted up his head and joined in the wild harmony; "he evidently fancies himself back again in Brittany, and perhaps recalls some of those glorious days he saw in the forest of Conveau with his late noble master Charles de St Prix, than whom a more energetic, indefatigable, and accomplished chasseur the world never produced."

Tennyson had been playing that lively air "Le point du jour," as it is given by Tellier in his admirable collection of hunting-songs entitled "Chansonnier du Chasseur," a work indispensable to those who would study the language of the French horn.

"Hounds are like men in many ways," said Will; "they always love the game at which they were first entered. You may steady them on

fresh game, it's true, but for all that, they never forget their first love."

"Quite right, Will; and yet I have known masters of fox-hounds perverse enough to enter their puppies on hare, under the impression, forsooth, that they learn to stoop better on the less-marked scent of that animal than on the more powerful taint of their natural game. This I believe to be a great mistake, to say nothing of the punishment the poor brutes undergo before they can be brought to unlearn the first lesson of their life, and abandon a habit in which they were first taught to indulge. Hear what Beckford says on the point: 'You had better enter them at their own game, it will save you much trouble afterwards; it is certainly most reasonable to use them to that which it is intended they should hunt.'"

"That's good doctrine, sir, without doubt," said Will; "and if that's from 'Thoughts on Hunting,' no wonder my old father, who lived with Lord Vernon, used to call that book the Archbishop's Bible; for his grace had great knowledge of hounds, and Beckford was his daily text-book."

The hound's look of intense delight, as he listened to the familiar notes of Tennyson's horn, would have been a fine subject for a sculptor's chisel; and had Chantrey, with his admiration for

hounds and strong love of nature, been there to catch it, the grand figure of the Brittany boarhound might have descended to posterity as the masterpiece of the great sculptor.

For the grand proportions and variety of its timber, as well as for the wild and magnificent scenery by which it is surrounded, the forest of Aitone, which the hunters are now on the point of drawing, will bear comparison with the noblest in Europe. Up to the height of 6000 feet above the level of the sea, the ilex, the oak, the pine, the chestnut, and the beech-tree, cover in stately form the whole surface of the country ; and although the ground from which they rise appears to be arid and sterile to the last degree, yet it throws up its produce with a lavish hand, and proves to be a soil highly conducive to the growth of the finest forest-trees. Indeed, the vegetable wealth of Corsica, considering the extent of the island, is not to be surpassed on this side of the Atlantic.

Here and there, however, in hollow and rugged glens, the timber of which has either been felled by man's hand or has failed in growth, a dense jungle of arbutus, ilex, and holly forms a fine cover for the boars which abound in the forest. From these strongholds, like a set of banditti, they issue forth at nightfall and commit grievous ravages on the neighbouring crops. During the

chestnut season, especially when the trees are shedding the fruit on which the Corsican peasant depends, as the natives of more favoured districts depend on bread corn, the boars not only take the lion's share of the spoil in the night, but even in the daytime continue to hunt up the farinaceous food with the most persistent avidity.

At such periods it occasionally happens that a monster solitaire becomes the terror of the forest. The fumes arising from the fermentation created by the chestnuts on which he has so greedily feasted, affect his brain, and the wild beast, already the fiercest of its kind, becomes, in the language of the peasantry, literally "mad drunk." Woe betide the traveller who is unlucky enough to cross the path of such a brute in his cups! If he be not well armed and well able to use his arms, he will be ripped up with as little ceremony as a hare is paunched by a huntsman. Nor does the solitaire wait to be attacked if he is intruded upon at such a time; the sight of a man near his feeding-ground is alone sufficient to induce a charge; and his temper, never a smooth one, is then so infuriated that the battle he provokes is soon brought to an end by a bloody victory on one side or the other. If the peasant, with his long knife, claim it, the result is a feast and a jollification throughout the whole commune. But if, on the other hand,

the tusks prevail, which not unfrequently proves to be the case, such a raid is organized as makes the forest ring with applause, and the fierce spirit of vengeance aroused in the Corsican heart is thus not only fairly appeased, but a stock of bacon of the finest quality is secured for the wants of the coming winter ; a result of no little importance and comfort to the hardy and ill-provided mountaineers.

If the object of the hunters had not been already made known to the inhabitants of Evisa, the invitation expressed by the notes of Tennyson's horn would have given them the clearest information on the subject. On all sides the peasantry, more or less injured by their bristly enemy, flocked to the sound ; not the summons of the fiery cross, when borne by Duncraggan's orphan heir, could have been responded to with greater alacity, when

Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpin rushed to arms.

But instead of the broad claymore or the long guerilla musket of more modern days, the carrying of which is now so strictly prohibited by the French government, every peasant bore in his belt a hunting-knife, which, in close encounter, he well knew how to wield with sharp and unerring precision.

Of dogs, too, a motley lot of grim nondescript mastiffs accompanied their masters, and, from their fierce demonstration towards Charon and Wildfire, Pendril expected every moment to see a general fight. Brando, however, acting as umpire, managed to keep the peace by giving the growlers a few hearty kicks with his iron-headed sabôt, hitting them under the jaw with a force that made them stagger from stem to stern. And instead of boiling over with wrath, as your true Briton would have done, the good-natured Corsicans absolutely roared with laughter at the shock and discomfiture inflicted on the dogs by this novel but rough process.

"Gently, gently," said Pendril, by way of remonstrance; "don't be quite so hard upon them, Brando, for they'll want every tooth in their head before the day's work is done."

"True, but the brutes that are now so ready to squabble will then be the shyest to fight," said the braconnier, nothing daunted by the reproof; "a bully's best weapon is his tongue."

CHAPTER XIII.

Then they fought for hours in a long summer day ;
Wind well thy horn, good hunter ;
Till the wild boar fain would have got him away
From Sir Ryalas, the jovial hunter.

IF Pendril, when he entered the wilds of Aitone, had believed the weird tales told him by the peasantry respecting the ferocity of its boars, he would have required the nerve and endurance of Sir Rylas of Chetwode to collar the monsters in that forest. Even that story of Greek mythology, which relates how Meleager, Theseus, Jason, and other notable heroes took the field against the Calydonian boar, was a tame fable compared with many which the Corsican peasants told. Will, however, for whose benefit Tennyson translated the legends, evinced for them a most capacious swallow and a wonderful digestion ; the higher, too, they were seasoned, the better they seemed to please his palate ; so Tennyson took care it should be gratified.

“The peasants believe that boar to be a fiend in bristly attire,” said he ; “for when he is

drunk, as he very often is in the chestnut season, he has followed them to their huts and ripped up the inmates before they could say a prayer."

This, however, was no fable, for the man who related the story was choking with emotion as he described the loss he had recently sustained in his own family. His wife and child were returning homewards, laden with the spontaneous harvest supplied by the forest, when they espied a monster solitaire, whetting his tusks against a tree within a few yards of their hut. To cast down their burdens, and rush towards the refuge so near at hand, was the work of a moment; but quick as they were, the boar was too quick for them. The ferocious brute, seeing them advance in his direction, instantly charged upon them with headlong fury; and, just as they were gaining the threshold of the hut, he struck the child with a force that severed it almost in twain. He then turned upon the woman, and inflicted such wounds upon her that she died the next day. Had her legs and body been hacked with a cleaver, they could scarcely have been worse mutilated.

"I hope we shall fall in with him to-day," said Will, passing his forefinger cautiously over the sharp edge of the *couteau-de-chasse* with which Pendril had provided him. "If we come to

close quarters with the beast, it shall be my fault if he ever gets drunk again."

Will's hunting passion was fairly roused by the affecting incidents he had just heard; and, although he would have preferred a mount and fifteen couple of stout hounds to follow the chase, after the fashion in Brittany, he was not only ready, but absolutely panting, for a fight with the brute on any terms. In the saddle or out of it, Will's heart was in the right place; and a hand-to-hand tussle with a boar, however dangerous, would have been a pastime to him in his present humour.

"It is an easier task," said Tennyson, "to hit a buffalo in the eye with an ounce ball, than to strike a pig in the right spot with a couteau-de-chasse; and if you miss the mark, he'll rip you into rags before you can quiet him. So take my advice, Will, and step out of his path when you see him coming; the chances are he'll hold on his course and not follow you."

Will, however, deeming this doctrine akin to that which represents discretion as the better part of valour, and which he had so often heard applied sneeringly to craners in the field, did as men are apt to do when they receive advice which they have no inclination to follow; he thanked Tennyson for it, but mentally resolved to

have a poke at the pig at any price, on the first opportunity.

The hunters had now arrived on the edge of a ravine, so overgrown with dense brushwood that the eye could scarcely detect the masses of rock that lay in huge rugged fragments beneath its tangled surface. One glance at it satisfied Pendril that pigs would travel a long distance to and from their feeding-ground to make this cover their home. There was water, shade, and shelter for them in all weathers ; and, unless the macchie were fired, it was difficult to understand how a boar could be forced to quit so impregnable a hold. Not one of the peasants carried so much as a hunting-pole in his hands ; they were not likely, then, to be of much service in doing the work of beaters, or in driving game so averse to break as the boar is from a cover of this description.

Many a well-used pathway, worn to the very rock, entered the ravine at various points, and presented the appearance of tunnels, hollowed equally out of the macchie above and the earth below. From the height and width of these paths, no one who saw them could be at a loss to know that they were the runs of wild boar, and that the game frequenting the ravine and creating such tracks must be abundant indeed.

While Pendril was deliberating as to the best mode of drawing the cover, and had almost come to the conclusion that, with his present force, it was utterly impracticable, Brando pointed at three or four gaunt, bony dogs belonging to the peasants, and assured him they understood their work admirably, and would stick to their game while they had life to do so.

"Lay them on the line," said he, "and if the boar is as big as a bison they'll bring him to bay, or force him into better ground."

"I never gave those mastiffs a thought," said Pendril; "although from their resemblance to your dog, I might have known they would cling to a scent with the pertinacity of a bloodhound. Charon, then, need not be ashamed of his company if that is their character."

"They are the shepherd-dogs of the country," said Brando, "and serve the double purpose of watching the flocks and driving the wild pigs from the peasants' crops. For the latter purpose, great care is observed in breeding from the best blood—nose, courage, and bone, being the chief qualities required; then they are early entered at the game which it is afterwards intended they should pursue."

"Valuable brutes, indeed," said Pendril, "but ugly as Cerberus himself. Of course they get fearfully mauled when they bring their game to bay?"

"No; the peculiarity of the race is that, with all their courage, they carefully avoid the boar's head; the flank and the shoulders are the points at which they strike in close quarters, so they rarely get ripped."

"Then it may fairly be inferred that they have not one drop of the English bulldog's blood in their veins," said Pendril; "for the head, and the head alone, is his mark always; a cross in that direction would unquestionably be a signal disadvantage to a dog that has to do with boars."

Falstaff, when he refused to march into Coventry at the head of his scarecrows, was doubtless heartily ashamed of his company; but this was not Pendril's feeling when he took a close look at the powerful, determined brutes that slouched along at their owner's heels, awaiting the word of command. That survey satisfied him that, in their united capacity, they would be awkward customers for the strongest beast the forest could produce.

"They are grim and ugly enough to frighten a boar to death," said Tennyson, "if he has but the bad luck to catch a view of them."

"Never mind their looks, Tennyson, if they can only do their work; that is the point we have to depend upon. I can well remember a consummate huntsman, called Will Long, de-

fending a three-cornered hound that was picked out as being no ornament to the Beaufort kennels: "Well, sir," he said, "that hound frightens more foxes to death than any six couple in the pack: we can't draft him."

The arrangement for drawing the cover was soon made. As the head of the ravine ran far up on the mountain side, it was found necessary to climb to the highest point of the open beech-forest, in order to draw downwards, the ravine itself being insurmountable in an opposite direction. Then, as Pendril and Tennyson flanked the ravine on either side, and commanded the few bare spots that afforded the chance of a shot, the rest of the party entered the hollow gorge, and drew, as best they could, the precipitous jungle in which they were engulfed. Here and there a path worn by the boars enabled the peasants to advance without extraordinary obstruction; but even then the labour was no trifle, owing to the stooping posture they were compelled to adopt in forcing their way through the tunnelled roads.

Will had lost sight of Charon the moment they entered the cover; and as the hound was a deep drawer, he felt sure he should hear before he saw him again. Nor was he doomed to long suspense: a roar, such as the God of war was

wont to give when he entered into battle, resounded far and wide, and made Will's heart beat against his ribs like a sledge-hammer. Again and again it was repeated, with a short, angry, defiant expression, only given when the hound was on rough game. Will held his breath for a moment to ascertain the direction of the hound's head, and finding it pointed downwards, and away for the lower depths of the gorge, he uttered a thrilling cheer, such as no horn ever equalled. If Charon had wanted encouragement, he must have found it in that cheer ; but the brave hound, once in chase, threw himself into it with such desperate impetuosity and mettle, that he heeded neither cheer nor rate when his blood was up on such occasions.

"That's a proclamation of war," said Pendril to Brando, who, as he did not venture to carry his gun, followed Pendril on the edge of the ravine, holloaing like a madman, and inciting the mastiffs to instant work.

"Charon is hard at it, and lets you know it," said Brando, "while our brutes are as mute as mummies."

"They may be doing quite as much as Charon," said Pendril, "although they say so little about it: however, in a deep cover like this, it certainly is a great advantage, as well

as a great pleasure, to hear your hounds at work."

If the mastiffs were mute, not so their masters, who, plunged over head and ears in the woody gulf below, were doing their utmost to make amends for this defect in their dogs: luckily, however, they were some way in the rear of Charon; so his fine, earnest note came ringing through the air, sonorous and distinct as a tower bell above the roar of a city. But the mastiffs were not idle, as Pendril rightly conjectured; for, as he kept his eye steadily directed to a bare spot ahead of Charon, and on the opposite side of the ravine, he viewed three pigs bounding over the stones in a terrible hurry; and in less than two minutes Charon and a couple of mastiffs dashed across the same spot, and plunged headforemost after them into the dense broussailles.

"Hot work for the pigs," said Pendril; "but why on earth Tennyson did not give them both barrels passes my comprehension."

Tennyson was posted at that moment within fifty yards of the rocky ground crossed by the pigs; and, although Charon's steady chop, and the crashing of the underwood indicated the exact route of the chase, the macchie was so high, and the slope of the ravine so precipitous between

him and it, that he failed to catch a glimpse of the game. However, he hurried onwards by the edge of the ravine, and had no difficulty in again heading the chase and placing himself in a more commanding position. Up to this point the pigs had never attempted to turn in cover, but held their course forward on the same side of the valley, as if they meant to break at the bottom of it for some other refuge. The wild shouts of the peasants had probably helped to scare them from the upper ground, as much as the fierce, resolute dogs by which they were so hotly pursued.

But, while the chase swept ahead, Will was left, as he afterwards described to Pendril, "like a trout in a trammel-net," kicking and plunging about in the dense macchie, which immured him round ninefold, and made him feel, if he did not exclaim, as Satan did,

Long is the way,
And hard, that out of hell leads up to light ;
Our prison strong.

All sound of Charon's tongue had now passed away ; and even the cry of the peasants, who had followed the boar-tracks and avoided the entanglements into which Will had fallen, could only faintly be heard by him, as he gasped for breath and bemoaned his untoward fate. It had

been a life-long maxim with him that a man who allowed himself to be lost in a run, was scarcely entitled to the respect of his fellow-creatures; and here he now was, planted like a popinjay, at which his friends, if they knew it, would direct shafts of ridicule for the rest of his days: the idea alone was enough to choke him.

In the meantime, Tennyson had taken a right and left shot at the pigs, and rolled over a brace of them; while the survivor, holding on towards the gorge of the ravine, was brought to bay in the bed of a brook, his head white with foam, and his ugly black eyes effulgent with rage.

When Pendril and Brando reached the spot, which they were the first to do, they were not a little surprised to find that Charon was not in his usual place, foremost in the fray, nor even present at the *take*, as stag-hunters are wont to express themselves; but the gaunt mastiffs alone encompassed the boar in a semicircle, watching their opportunity to rush in and collar him. This, however, they rarely ventured to do before the arrival of a hunter, on whose knife they were forced to depend for substantial help in these deadly encounters: and as, on this occasion, the boar stood up to his belly in water, with his back against a rock, the dogs appeared to exercise a

sound discretion in waiting for aid ere they attacked him in so strong a position.

"I'll dislodge him in a second," said Brando, proceeding to scale the rock in the rear of the beast, and carrying with him a few large pebbles to pelt down on his head; "but you had better stand on one side, while I serve the ejectionment."

Pendril had slung his rifle over his back, and was prepared with his *couteau-de-chasse* to give the boar his quietus, so soon as he was fairly collared by the dogs; and, having so often seen the stroke given by his old friend, St. Prix, in the Brittany forests, he had perfect confidence in his own power that he could deal it with like effect; so Brando's admonition that he should stand on one side till the boar charged, and the dogs had fastened upon him, was uttered in vain.

The first stone from Brando made the boar toss up his nose and glare wickedly; the dogs then advanced a pace or two, but as the braconnier shouted out in a voice of thunder, "Back, you brutes, or you'll be torn to ribbons!" they dropped warily backwards into their former ground. The next stone, hitting him in the hind quarters, brought the beast from his hold, like a torrent bursting its bounds. He came straight at Pendril, as if he looked upon

him as the chief aggressor, and would have certainly annihilated him on the spot but for the instant aid of the five mastiffs.

In jumping on one side to avoid the charge, Pendril had missed his footing, and, before he could recover himself, the boar caught him under the knee with his huge, curved tusks, and hurled him with great force to the ground. The boar now followed up his blow, and reared with his forelegs on Pendril's chest, in order to take another cut at a more vital spot; but at that moment the mastiffs seized him simultaneously in the flanks and at each shoulder, and so fierce was the attack, that the boar flung himself violently backwards to free himself from their deadly grip. That moment enabled Pendril to give him the blow on which he had so much relied; like a flash of lightning the *couteau-de-chasse* descended on the boar, and drank his heart's blood, and in a few seconds the wild, grisly, untameable 'beast fell lifeless at his feet.

Pendril escaped with a mere scratch, for, happily for him, he wore a thick pair of Cord-*ing's* leggings, which the boar struck with his tusk and ripped in twain like so much brown paper. His back, too, was badly bruised by the rifle: these, however, were trifles compared with

the treatment he must have suffered but for the timely attack of the brave mastiffs.

The peasants soon gathered round the spot, and bestowed a thousand caresses on their dogs as they lay panting round the boar. Great, too, was their exultation on hearing from Tennyson that he had killed a brace in the cover above, and four sturdy fellows, with an eye to the winter bacon, at once volunteered to return with Tennyson and secure the valuable prize.

"But where's Will," said Pendril, beginning to feel uneasy at the non-appearance of his trusty henchman; "I fear some accident has occurred, for it is a rare event for him to be thrown out in chase."

"He has probably forsaken the boar-tracks and wandered into the macchie," said Brando; "and if so, he will be half-strangled and compelled to use his knife before he gets clear of it; at least, such is my experience of that infernal scrub."

"And Charon, too; his absence is utterly unaccountable," said Pendril; "he must have been disabled in some way or other, or the brave hound would be now in his place, that's certain."

At that moment the distant tongue of the hound in chase clearly demonstrated that at least

he was still on his legs, and working some game with his usual energy. "The vagrant has changed his game, depend upon it," said Pendril, not a little relieved at hearing those pleasant notes thundering through the valley, "and Will, too, is not far off, I'll warrant him."

This was quite true so far as Charon was concerned. A fresh boar of enormous size was seen by a peasant to cross the line of the hunted game, so near to the hound, that a change was the result. But Will was still fast bound in the macchie, and as unable to get at the hound as if he had been shut up in purgatory. He could hear him, indeed, at no great distance, but this, if anything, only served to aggravate his torture—as the sight of the Lethean stream augmented the pains of those who were ferried to and fro, and made them wish and struggle as they passed,

To reach

The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe.

But Gorgonian terrors opposed the attempt. So hollies, briars, and climbers, twisted like the locks of Medusa, resisted Will's progress, and brought him, as he listened to Charon's note, well nigh to the verge of despair.

But when it was discovered what game Charon was in pursuit of, Brando pronounced it a most

fortunate circumstance for the henchman that he had been so incarcerated : the solitaire had been roused, and Will had far better have met a lion in the way than that monster in one of his narrow tunnel-tracks.

Pendril and Tennyson had again taken up their positions on each side of the ravine, while the peasants proceeded to encourage their dogs to pack in with Charon, and support him in his hazardous work. This they were no longer slack in doing ; for, having discovered the authenticity of Charon's tongue, they perfectly understood the significance of those earnest notes that seemed to bid them to the chase ; so the mastiffs dashed into cover without their masters, who, knowing what game was a-foot, were only too glad to keep out of it.

Brando, who was standing at Pendril's elbow, now pointed to a bend in the brook directly in front of the hound's head.

"Keep your eye on that water," he said quietly to Pendril ; "it appears to me the beast means to cross about that point."

And he did so, almost before Brando had finished speaking, giving Pendril a fair open shot, as he stepped leisurely into the cooling stream. Both balls hit the boar ; but, to Pendril's surprise, did not prove stoppers : for quitting the stream

in a far less dignified fashion than he had entered it, he darted headforemost into the macchie, and made directly for the quarter in which Will was detained. Close on his heels, and full of fire, came the Brittany hound and the mute mastiffs all packing together as if they had been bred in the same kennel, and had a common enemy to deal with; and now on his bloody track, the reunion was not likely to be impaired.

By dint of perseverance and the frequent use of his hunting-knife, Will had now managed to struggle within a few paces of an open boar-track; and in another half-minute would have fairly escaped from his entanglement. But, as Charon's notes came nearer and nearer, he paused for a moment to enjoy the sound, and congratulate himself on being once more so near the chase, which he had deemed lost and gone from the ravine. A crash of the bushes, however, within a few feet of his elbow, and then a short wheezing grunt, as that of a beast in distress, warned him to stand fast and look to his weapon in case of instant attack; but the solitaire passed on, neither looking on this side nor that, and left the gallant henchman growling with disgust at not being able to meet the boar face to face, and fight him, single-handed, there and then.

"As the brute trotted by," said Will after-

wards to Pendril, "he was so near that, if he had given me time, I could have counted the bristles on his neck; and one of his tusks, which was covered with blood, appeared to me to be as long as a hunting-horn. Oh! had he been but three feet nearer, I might have settled him on the spot, and saved the time, trouble, and ammunition that he has now cost us."

Had Will's aspirations been realized, the account between the boar and himself would have been soon settled, and in a fashion very different from that on which the henchman reckoned; but, observing the Corsican peasants enter the cover, depending on their knives alone for protection, he had no notion of not being able to do what any other man on earth could do in a matter of manly prowess. In these degenerate days we have no such men as the Taberdar of Queen's, who choked a boar in Shotover forest with a volume of Aristotle's Ethics, shouting out, as he thrust it into his assailant's throat, "*Græcum est.*" Nor can any Englishman handle a long knife, like a Frenchman or a Spaniard, in a fight with a wild beast; with them, it is a feat of skill and dexterity acquired by early practice; but with the other brute force is the element of success on which he mainly depends. Therefore, as the boar in this case was by far the bigger

and stronger animal of the twain, Will's chance of victory, had they closed in fight, would have been remote indeed.

So Pendril, in responding to his trusty henchman's regret, said pleasantly, "If you have a spark of right feeling within you, Will, you will not fail, on your return to Goodwell, to send a sovereign to the parson of the parish, as a thank-offering, in token of your miraculous deliverance from sudden death. This is a good old custom of the Jews, and one which a Christian, who has been the object of a signal mercy, would do well to imitate."

Twenty-six gunshots, most of them hitting the body, though not in a vital spot, did that boar sustain before the mastiffs and Chàron could venture to close with him; and then, it was a wonderful sight to view the beast as he floundered through the brook, carrying a huge brindle mastiff aloft on his shoulders, while the rest had fastened on his hams and flanks with ferocious tenacity. But even in this condition the boar, though shackled and bleeding at many points, was not to be conquered without a tremendous struggle on the part of his assailants. Over and over they rolled in the tiny stream, hitherto pellucid as that of Bandusia, but now turbid with foam and gore, the boar always below and the

brindle mastiff holding on and clinging to the bristly foe, like the old man of the sea to Sinbad's shoulders. Charon, too, like an old soldier, had seized him in a safe quarter, just below the brute's tail ; and there fixed, firm as a limpet to a rock, he almost controlled the boar's course as a rudder controls that of a ship in motion.

The desperate hubbub of the fray had reached the peasants' ears, and they, bounding into the macchie with naked blades, soon found their way downwards to the battle-ground. It needed, however, no mighty arm to give the final stroke to the sinking game : through the bullet-holes, now washed by the water, oozed many a purple rill, the life-blood of the giant beast ; and ere Pendril and Will could reach the spot, the solitaire had succumbed to his foes and ceased to live.

Then arose a shout to the sky, wild as that of the well-greaved Greeks, when Hector fell before the son of Peleus—a shout of triumph and joy. As the squire's who-whoop was heard at Cottesmore, when he killed that Ashby pasture fox of imperishable renown, so that concentrated fire of twenty brazen throats was heard in the village of Evisa, far in the forest below. When the cause was known, great were the rejoicings throughout that and the neighbouring communes, and if Pendril had returned to Evisa, he would have

been welcomed by the grateful villagers with an ovation worthy of a conqueror.

From the day on which the edict for the suppression of fire-arms in Corsica came into force, the peasantry on the borders of Aitone had been kept in a perpetual state of terror and bondage by that brute. The boldest of them, armed with a knife alone, dared not enter the lists with so formidable an antagonist; so it was not to be wondered at if Pendril's timely success, so soon after the massacre of the peasant's wife and child, were hailed with loud pæans of joy, and the death of the solitaire looked upon as a deliverance by the whole district.

Brando secured both hams for his friends the monks of St. Martino, who, in his estimation, were at once the best judges and the best purveyors of charcuterie in the whole island. "They souse their hams," said he, "in a pickle of juniper berries and brown sugar, and then hang them for a month in the chimney of the refectory." The swine's flesh, fed upon chestnuts, and thus treated, becomes a viand worthy of the immortal gods. The boar's head was carried to Goodwell, where it now hangs as the trophy of that memorable day; and under it is inscribed the following fragment of an old carol—

Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

CHAPTER XIV.

'Tis rash to meet, but surer death to wait,
 Till here they hunt us to undoubted fate ;
 And, if my plan but hold, and Fortune smile,
 We'll furnish mourners for our funeral pile.
 THE CORSAIR.

TEMPLE's introduction to Galofaro, at the jaws of his own den, and on the brink of a precipice a thousand feet high, would have been deemed an ominous one by most men in such a position ; but as he either did not or would not see how galling it was to the smuggler, he rather chuckled at the notion of gaining a favourable turn in the game which he was now determined to play, at all hazards, to the very last move.

During the first few days, however, Temple saw little or nothing of Galofaro, for, as the latter had very soon discovered that a cordon of gendarmes had been drawn round the Val-dell'-Orco, and that every movement of his was subjected to the surveillance of a set of douaniers, the promotion of whom was made to depend on his capture,

he necessarily adopted the night time for his visits to the Grotta. No wild cat of the neighbouring cairns ever moved through the bush with stealthier step or keener eye than Galofaro on these occasions; and the spring of that animal on its prey would scarcely have been more flash-like or more fatal than his had a douanier encountered him on these nightly errands. His soul yearned for his daughter; and well he knew that, so long as he was ashore, Agnese would imperil her own life to see him, if he failed to visit his home at some period of the night or day.

So Temple had the days and Agnese all to himself. Will it be asked how he availed himself of such an opportunity? whether, in addition to the happiness of loving and being loved, he endeavoured to cultivate with any one right principle the virgin soil of that mind which he found innocent, and pure, and bright as that of Eve herself fresh from the hands of her Creator? Or did he scatter broadcast over it, as an enemy might have done, the evil seeds of a fierce and devouring passion, which would sooner or later bring forth its inevitable crop of tares, sorrow, anguish, and death?

Alas! the fair prototype of poor Agnese fell before the archtempter, apparently without a

struggle. It must be confessed, however, that Agnese, Nature's child as she was, had seen a trifle more of the world than simple Eve; yet this advantage, if it could be called so, would have been powerless to protect her in the great danger to which she was now exposed. No; it was something more than mere experience of life that must save her from touching the forbidden fruit which hung so temptingly within her reach. Happily for her, she possessed in full measure that divine principle of innate purity, without which her best resolutions would have faded, like dew under a summer sun.

This it was that inspired her soul, and on this alone depended the secret of her strength, as that of Samson on his lock of hair. This it was that fortified the maiden fortress as it were with a barrier of triple brass, and enabled it to hold out triumphantly against the most insidious schemes of a bold, subtle, and practised strategist.

But who shall paint the struggle this effort cost her? who describe the tumult raging in the vestal's veins, the war between sense and principle, flesh and spirit? The power of words is inadequate to the task.

Towards the close of a beautiful autumn day—the very eve of that day on which Pendril and his companions followed the chase in the forest of

Aitone—Temple lay in a nook of the broad ledge surrounding the Grotta, and close beside him sat Agnese on a block of stone, from which point every object in the gorge below was visible to the naked eye. Neither her eyes nor her thoughts, however, seemed to be travelling beyond the limits of her narrow domain; for apparently she and Temple were wholly engrossed by the playful antics of the kid, which frisked and capered around them in the merriest mood; now bounding in the air, and now pirouetting on its hind legs to the very verge of the precipice, utterly unmindful of the danger to which it was exposed.

"You don't seem to be alarmed for its safety, Agnese," said Temple, who was expecting every instant to see the little madcap go toppling over the precipice.

"No; I am accustomed to its gambols, and have never seen it make a false step, even in play."

"Ah! that giddy thing was born under a fortunate planet, and is well aware that its guardian angel is at hand watching over its welfare. I envy its happy lot, Agnese, and would gladly exchange mine for it to-morrow if I thought I should be petted in like manner."

"You would soon be weary of such a life,"

said Agnese, parrying the proposal, "especially if you were condemned to pass it among these rocks and solitudes."

"But is the happiness I pray for to be obtained on no other terms?" said Temple, who had already sketched out a plan for their flight to England, and urged it on her acceptance with all the eloquence and ardour of which his ingenuity was capable.

"On no other," she replied solemnly, "except——" and at this point her voice faltered with intense emotion, which, notwithstanding all the courage of her true woman's heart, she could no longer suppress; "except," she continued, "at God's altar."

Hitherto, in the many private little talks they had held as to their future plans, little had been said with respect to matrimony by either party. Temple avoided the rock as one fraught with danger to his prospects in life; and Agnese, from an innate consciousness that allusion to the subject should first come from Temple, forbore touching upon it until she found herself all but shipwrecked and lost by the delay. At length it was wrenched out of her.

Eternal disrespect for himself must await the man who would place a woman in so false a position.

"Never," she repeated, "except at God's altar." The poor girl's earnest and decisive tone would have extinguished the hope of most men; but Temple, who had the tact, the duplicity, and the perseverance of Talleyrand, only felt roused by it to further action. So Temple dropped his hands, eased the rein, and humoured the pace at which the young one seemed determined to go.

"That is my full intention, of course," said Temple, placidly; a promise that burst forth on Agnese's heart as a gleam of sunshine from a dark cloud; but, had the mental reservation by which it was accompanied been unmasked, thunder and lightning would have speedily followed the transient ray; and then, to them—the deluge.

At this moment the wild scream of the sea eagle brought Temple suddenly to his legs. Agnese too, who had been lost in reverie, scanned the deep gorge as if she felt sure the note of that unerring and far-sighted sentinel would not have been sounded, if something unusual and strange had not appeared within its range of vision. So she looked intently over the rude parapet, expecting to see the object of the bird's alarm; but she looked in vain.

"Zara left for the well at least three hours ago," said Agnese, "and it may be the eagle sees her returning, and mistakes her for a stranger; but

it rarely happens that the bird gives a false signal : my father never doubts it."

The poor dumb attendant, whose mutilation, however, did not affect her ears or her eyes, had generally contrived to absent herself from the Grotta during the greater part of Temple's visits. On the present occasion she had trotted down the rocky staircase with a pitcher in one hand and a coil of rope in the other, and had gone, apparently in search of firewood and water, to the forest below. But the time for her usual return had fully expired; and as the shadows in the rocky glen were now rapidly increasing in length and intensity, Agnese began to feel uncomfortable at her prolonged and unaccountable absence.

"Something unusual must have detained Zara, said Agnese, "or she certainly would have returned to the Grotta before this time."

"Mayhap some prowling brigands have laid their claws on her," said Temple, by way of consolation. "They may get some water from her pitcher, but it will puzzle them to get any secrets out of her."

Agnese, however, was in far too serious a mood to jest on the subject, and was turning to reprove him for his ill-timed levity, when again that shrill note of the eagle vibrated on her ear, and added greatly to her anxiety.

"My father will soon be here," she said, in a low voice, as if she thought the very presence of Galofaro were sufficient to protect them from all danger, present and to come, whereas, in reality, he was the chief cause of the trouble that awaited her on her very threshold; and he it was who, carrying on a contraband trade and defying the law, brought, as smugglers generally bring, desolation and ruin to his own hearth.

At this announcement, if he could have done so on any decent pretence, Temple would have taken up his hat and bid Agnese and the Grotta adieu for the night. But although the current of his blood scarcely flowed with its wonted freedom in the company of Galofaro, he would have deemed it an unmanly act to quit the Grotta under existing circumstances; so he again seated himself on the block which Agnese had now left, and awaited Zara's return.

Had Agnese marked the look of resignation expressed in Temple's countenance by this necessity, it might have opened her eyes to a further insight into that gentleman's character. But love is blind; and if an angel from heaven had come down expressly to heal Agnese's infirmity, the waters would have been troubled in vain. She believed in Temple with her whole soul, and would willingly have died rather than suffer a tittle of

her faith to be disturbed or diverted from the idol she had taken to her innermost heart. Agnese, who had not for one moment quitted her post on the parapet, at length turned suddenly round, and, with an ejaculation of delight, informed Temple that Zara was in sight, wending her way with a quick step homewards.

"Then," said Temple, inwardly rejoicing at the prospect of getting away from the Grotta before the arrival of Galofaro, and perhaps a little crestfallen in his own estimation at the result of his last effort with Agnese—"then I shall now commit you to her hands, and of course you will be safer in them than in mine."

But Agnese, apparently not heeding his remark, took his hand between hers, and, with a gentle pressure, compelled him to stay until Zara had explained to them the history of her prolonged absence. However, the terrified countenance of the poor woman, and the agitation she was in, made it no easy matter even for Agnese to decipher the signs which, with the rapidity of thought, she executed on her trembling hands.

It appeared that on returning through the dense macchie which encloses the entrance to the Val-dell'-Orco and screens it from the outer world by a mass of evergreen foliage, into whose sacred shade not even "day's garish eye" pre-

sumes to enter, Zara suddenly became aware that the air in which she moved was strongly impregnated with tobacco-smoke. So she paused and looked around her with the utmost caution to discover, if possible, the quarter whence it originated. This she was not long in doing, for, literally led by her nose, she crept stealthily to a spot so hemmed in by holly and ilex that she could advance no farther. Her quick eye, however, was not slow to detect through the tangled shrubs the presence of half a dozen gendarmes, lying on the ground within this natural bower. They were all smoking and talking in so earnest but subdued a tone, that she held her breath and drew as near as she could venture to the intervening screen, hoping to hear the subject of their conversation, which, she shrewdly suspected, related to Galofaro and the occupants of the Grotta.

"He invariably takes himself off to Ajaccio at nightfall, I tell you," said a young officer, who appeared to command the party, "and then, when the coast is clear, I believe the sea-wolf comes to his den."

"In that case," said another, "may the colony of Cayenne be my lot if I do not take him, alive or dead, this night."

The speaker was a huge, square-shouldered Hercules, called by his comrades Louis le Grand.

He had been especially selected for this service, and being a man whose courage and audacity were on a par with his physical strength, it was believed if he came within arm's length of Galofaro that the freebooter would be no match for the Titan.

"Bravo, Louis! thou shalt not want one man, at least, who will stand by thee to the last drop of his blood," said De Grenier, who, half ashamed of his position as commandant of a troop of detectives, would have himself bearded the lion in his den, if he had known when and how to catch him there.

Poor Zara's heart, as she listened to the language of those two determined men, quivered with fear; and certainly if either of them had applied his ear to the ground, after the fashion of Fine-ear, he might have heard its quick and tremulous pulsation, even at that distance. But while she was deliberating on the best mode of retreating from the spot in order to convey her tidings to Agnese as speedily as possible, the men arose and separated, having first arranged that the Grotta should be attacked by the whole party so soon as Galofaro could be distinctly harboured in his rocky lair.

Accordingly a cordon was at once drawn across the jaws of the Val-dell'-Orco, so that to enter it

without observation would have been a feat worthy of the smuggler's art. Alas! Zara, in her attempt to do so, suddenly found herself face to face with Louis le Grand himself; and that hero, under the impression that Galofaro was a kind of Proteus, capable of assuming the form of any living animal, even that of an old woman, subjected the poor helpless creature to somewhat rough usage; nor did she escape from his clutches till he was thoroughly convinced his suspicions on that point were altogether unfounded. The eagle had then sounded the alarm—a foreboding signal that was invariably followed by further incidents more or less affecting the tenants of the rock.

The contortions of Zara's countenance, as she described these proceedings, expressed, far better than mere words could do, the terror she suffered and the woe she anticipated from the proposed night attack. Agnese, on the other hand, although unprepared for such astounding information, received it, as Joan of Arc might have done, with a calm awe, but without a shadow of dismay; indeed, craven fear had no place in her nature. Young, placid, and gentle, she bent like a bulrush before the soft south wind or the rippling wave; but when the storm broke and the waters rose, at such time the spirit of the sire gleamed in her eye, and she gave token that she could be, as he was, "A daring pilot in extremity."

"God grant," she said, calmly, "that my father may not attempt his usual visit, at least this night. But if he do, and his foot be once planted on the rock, I shall have no fear for his safety."

"Would he defend it, think you, against such odds?" inquired Temple, doubtfully.

"To the last drop of his blood," replied Agnese, unhesitatingly, but half surprised at the question. "My father will scarcely trouble himself about their numbers if they are rash enough to attack him on his own hearthstone."

However disposed Temple might have been to escape from the company of Galofaro, and thereby from the consequences of an impending and probably a bloody struggle, in which he could gain little, and might lose not only his liberty but his life, he was not slow to foresee that, if the fortune of war favoured the gendarmes, the smuggler would not be the only prize on which they would lay hands; and his soul absolutely felt the torture of Hades as he pictured to himself his fair Briseis in the possession of another man. He would have closed his eyes, if he could, at the hideous apparition, but, like the genius in the fairy tale, it assumed at once such gigantic proportions that it scared and mastered even its own creator.

"Quite right too," exclaimed Temple, who had made up his mind that, whatever might be the upshot, he would await Galofaro's arrival at the Grotta, and then shape his course according to circumstances; "but can he succeed in running the blockade, Agnese? for that will be no easy task even for so practised a hand."

"Certainly; there are twenty different entrances to the gorge, many of which are known to my father alone, and these, by night or by day, are as familiar to him as his own pocket."

"In that case, if he is as sure-footed as a chamois, and as stealthy as a mountain cat, it is just possible he may do it without detection."

While this conversation was going on, Zara, who had apparently recovered her equilibrium, was busily engaged in rolling boulders of two or three hundred weight apiece to the edge of the plateau at the head of the staircase. Exerting her utmost physical power, she managed in a short time to raise a pile so formidable that nothing less than a field-piece could have breached it; and as it frowned over the almost perpendicular pathway in front, and rested on its side upon the sheer edge of the precipice, no human being except a sailor would have attempted to scale so loose and so inaccessible a structure. But throwing over it a rope, which was made fast

to an iron ring fixed into the solid rock, Zara contrived to render the ascent comparatively easy by these means, and thus to secure for Galofaro a ready access in case of hot pursuit ; while, on the other hand, by the withdrawal of the rope, as in the case of Robinson Crusoe's ladder, the barrier became at once insurmountable. A draw-bridge and a portcullis could scarcely have fortified the rocky citadel more securely.

Agnese, too, lent a willing hand to this labour ; and, although at every additional stone piled upon the parapet Temple's incarceration for the night became more and more probable, the prospect of Agnese's capture filled him with an apprehension that chained him, as it were, to the spot ; and under this feeling, strong as death, he came to the resolution that, so long as he could pull a trigger, no gendarmes should lay a finger on Agnese.

"Unlucky rather," he exclaimed to himself, as, probing his coat pocket he discovered that he had no ammunition beyond the six charges in his Fauchaux revolver ; "however, that will probably be more than enough, if Galofaro's the man I take him to be."

Temple, while at Oxford, had devoted so much of his time to the pistol galleries that he had become a finished performer with that weapon ;

and although he could not pretend to the skill of Captain Tom Gronow, who, in the days of Plancus, could literally snuff off nine sparrows' heads out of ten, yet his prowess was such that at twelve paces he could hit the ace of hearts a dozen times in succession; so at close quarters he was likely to be an awkward customer, especially when fighting in self-defence.

Agnese's anxious looks, as the time drew near for her father's expected visit, did not escape Temple's observation; but he totally misconstrued their meaning, when he said, in an encouraging tone—"Cheer up, Agnese; these fellows will scarcely dare to attack the Grotta when they find your father and me so well prepared to receive them."

"They would be bold men to do so; but although the reward offered for my father's apprehension is so large, I believe it will be many a day before that prize is earned. For him I have no fear; he is, and ever has been, a true Corsican, defying the law, reckless of consequences, and always escaping by a thousand devices from the traps laid for his capture. But for you, carissimo, my soul shudders at the thought of your lifting a finger in Galofaro's defence; the very act will compromise you and probably not add to his safety."

"But surely, Agnese, you would not condemn me to be a mere passive spectator of an assault on your home; a looker-on who had less interest in the matter than the sea-eagle chained to yon granite cliff!"

At that moment the bird again uttered its shrill warning note, and before Temple could finish what he had to say, Galofaro, swinging himself lightly by the aid of the rope, cleared the parapet and landed on the plateau with as much ease as if he had only bounded over the bulwarks of his own felucca. At the same instant a dozen bullets came whistling through the air, and fell, flattened against the cliff, harmless at his feet.

"Those are the drops before the storm, Agnese," he coolly said, as he hauled in the rope after him; "but under this shelter it will burst, and roar, and crackle in vain; and the wolves below will howl for their breakfast long before they get it at the Grotta."

He then turned abruptly to Temple, and, whether he suspected his honesty, or really wished to save him from the consequences that would be sure to follow his espousal of Galofaro's cause, will for ever remain a mystery. Probably the latter feeling prevailed; for, fret and fume as he would at the unpleasant thought, he could no longer resist the conviction that Agnese's life

was now in Temple's power, and that her happiness was indissolubly linked with his.

"This, sir," he said, "is my affair, not yours, and you will do wisely, I venture to think, if you leave it in my hands. But decide for yourself. Here are weapons at your service" (pointing to the boulders) "if you stay; or you can withdraw safely by a passage at present unknown to you, if you prefer that course."

"No, Galofaro," said Temple, with emphatic expression, "I'll not quit this rock till the women at least are safe. It is a man's privilege and duty to defend women; and I should hold myself cheap indeed, and unworthy of my birthright, if I shirked the protection which Agnese and Zara may now claim at my hands."

This answer appeared to satisfy the smuggler, for he drew a long Malay creese from his belt, and handing it to Temple, bid him drive it to the hilt whenever he struck a foe.

The sound of many voices now rose on the night breeze, and the tramp of feet among the boulders below told the little garrison but too plainly that the enemy consisted, not of six, but of twenty gendarmes, and that the attack was imminent.

"Keep your heads well below the bulwarks," cried Galofaro, who observed the young moon

rising at their backs and casting a faint ray into the hollow gorge; "with so many against us, it wont do to throw away a chance."

Close as the cordon had been drawn across the jaws of the valley, the smuggler had entered it unobserved; and had it not been for De Grenier, who was reconnoitring the staircase, and had ascended some ten feet from the ground, he would have reached the Grotta, as usual, without obstruction. Then the short struggle that ensued on that narrow path would scarcely have ended as it did, if De Grenier had not mistaken Galofaro for one of his own men; and, before he could turn round to face his enemy and draw his weapon in self-defence, the smuggler sprang upon him like a tiger-cat, and, seizing him behind, lifted him off his legs and hurled him headlong over the cliff, as far

As ever peasant pitched a bar.

The poor fellow, as it happened, fell upon his legs; but in such a way that both were fractured close above the ankle joints; however, notwithstanding the shock, he had just life enough left in him to shout for help. The instant answer was a volley from his men, the effect of which, as we have seen, was harmless as that of a storm of hail. Galofaro was safe behind his ramparts.

"They may as well pelt us with chestnuts," said the smuggler, chuckling aloud at the ineffective fire which was now directed against the cliff; "they'll find the granite a trifle harder than French lead."

"Better not whistle before we are out of the wood, Galofaro," said Temple, prophetically; and just as the words had escaped the inclosure of his lips, a bullet cracked against the rock, and, rebounding, buried itself in Zara's shoulder-blade.

Her shrill unearthly scream startled the assailants in the gorge below, and might have been heard on the distant sea shore.

"Curse that noise!" said Galofaro, impatiently; "'twill tell a pleasant tale to the wolves' ears." But, fearing lest Agnese should suffer from a like cause, he ordered her to withdraw to the interior of the Grotta and there to attend to Zara's wound.

The weird cry of the tongueless woman was at once followed by a rush at the staircase. The giant Louis, as he had sworn to win the prize, was the first to mount the rock. "One at a time," he said, in a fierce stentorian voice to his comrades, as they pressed on eagerly at his heels; "the path wont bear two abreast, I tell you."

Brave and picked men as they were, not one

of the rest seemed disposed to dispute the honour of leading the assault which Louis now claimed ; and so far as their position was concerned, it was fortunate for them that a man of his bulk led the way ; a more convenient shield could not have been devised for their safety ; but at what cost to Louis will be speedily seen.

The mere task of mounting the narrow, declivitous path was no ordinary matter at any time ; but now, with insufficient light, and in the face of a desperate foe, it required all the recklessness as well as intrepidity of Louis to attempt the daring feat. The breach at Badajoz could scarcely have been more perilous.

“Forty more steps,” he shouted to those in his rear, “and I’ll drag the caitiff from his den.”

A low, gibing laugh, like that of an unfed hyæna, burst from Galofaro’s lips, as he raised his hand to a poised boulder and toppled it over into the hollow pathway. Downwards it sped, like a thunderbolt from Jove, and if the giant had been furnished with a shield forged by Vulcan himself, it would have availed him little in this encounter ; his breast-bone was absolutely smashed in by the blow, and his huge body thrown back upon the foremost of his comrades with such force that two of them were at once

knocked off their legs and whirled over the precipice.

"That at least has staggered some of them," said the smuggler to Temple, as the heavy thud of the falling bodies caught his ear.

"Give them the other barrel," said Ahitophel, "or the work will only be half done;" and he stepped forward to launch another messenger on its deadly errand.

But Galofaro stayed his hand: "Hold," he cried, "not a stone must be wasted; the wolves are checked for the present, but there is no telling how soon or how long the attack may be continued. We shall want every shot in the locker before the pack is dispersed."

CHAPTER XV.

Blessed is the turf, serenely blessed,
 Where throbbing hearts may sink to rest,
 Where life's long journey turns to sleep,
 Nor ever pilgrim wakes to weep.
 A little sod, a few sad flowers,
 A tear for long-departed hours,
 Is all that feeling hearts request
 To hush their weary thoughts to rest.
 There shall no vain ambition come
 To lure them from their quiet home ;
 Nor sorrow lift, with heartstrings riven,
 The meek imploring eye to heaven :
 Nor sad remembrance stoop to shed
 His wrinkles on the slumberer's head ;
 And never, never love repair
 To breathe his idle whispers there !

LEIGH HUNT.

THE smuggler was quite right in his tactics ;
 the gendarmes, on discovering the impossibility
 of advancing in any way except in single file,
 fell back for the moment in utter discomfiture, the
 loss of their best men being the result of their
 rash assault. Galofaro, foreseeing that so soon
 as the news of their disaster became known at
 Ajaccio, an efficient force, armed with a field-
 piece, would be despatched to the Val-dell'-Orco,

he determined to reserve all his resources for the coming emergency, and to defend his position to the last.

"More sea-room would be safer than this badger's earth," he said, bitterly; "but as I was bred in it, may my right hand wither at the socket, if I suffer an enemy to cross its threshold!"

This was no empty boast on the part of Galofaro; for, had the little garrison been well provisioned, it might have held out as long as Troy; but at that moment, in consequence of Zara's misadventure, there was not a pitcher of water within the rock, as the smuggler soon found to his dismay.

The night was now dark as Erebus; and, as no sound but that of the brawling brook could be heard in the glen below, Galofaro called to Agnese to keep watch at the parapet, while he entered the Grotta to refresh himself with food: of this there was biscuit and fruit in abundance, besides a hoard of fresh chestnuts just laid up in store for winter use. The smuggler fed heartily, and pressed Temple to do the same, warning him that the present might be his best opportunity for such a requirement.

"Now, bring me a drink," he said impatiently to Zara, who forgetful of her wound, was busily employed in attending to the table; "bring me a drink from the silver well."

"There is Vico and eau-de-vie, father," said Agnese, overhearing the demand; "but not one drop of water: Zara, on returning from the well, was waylaid by a monster, and lost her pitcher in the struggle that ensued between them."

The smuggler started from his seat as if he had been struck by an assassin. "No water!" he exclaimed, wildly, "then by heaven we must run for it, unless a supply can be at once obtained."

"That you shall have in one half hour," replied Agnese, who would willingly have perished on the spot rather than forsake her Penates.

So saying, she lighted a pine-torch, and taking a double-handled Spanish water-jar, was about to proceed on her perilous mission when Galofaro seized the vessel, and, with a voice of thunder, ordered Zara to bear it instantly to the well. "And if they catch you again this time," he added, "I hope they'll skin you alive, you clumsy fool."

The poor wounded, terror-stricken woman was too well acquainted with Galofaro's character to refuse obedience, and proceeded at once to execute the order so savagely given. Agnese, however, was not to be daunted. "Stay, Zara," she said, detaining her, "if my father will not suffer me to go alone, at least I will accompany you to the well."

Temple, who for the last three hours had undergone a foretaste of purgatory, now saw the gap in the fence for which he had been long on the look out. So before Galofaro could again reply, he said, "You can't do less, Agnese ; and it shall be my business to protect you both."

If Temple had counselled the crew of the felucca to resist the orders of her captain, Galofaro would have given him to the fishes without a single scruple or a second thought on the subject ; but on the present occasion the strong ties that bound the father to his daughter not only fettered his action, but compelled him to submit to the mutinous advice thus tendered in his very teeth. "Water must be had, or the Grotta abandoned forthwith," he said, with apparent resignation ; but the glare of his eye, as it fell upon Temple's, revealed a volcanic fire seething beneath the surface, and on the very point of eruption ; however, the controlling power above alluded to was there to suppress it awhile, leaving Agnese at full liberty to "gang her ain gait" in the matter of the well.

Galofaro returned at once to the parapet in front of the Grotta ; while the trio, headed by Agnese with a blazing flambeau, penetrated the subterranean passage, and soon reached the outlet on the opposite side of the hill. Before,

however, they could venture to emerge into open air, the light was carefully extinguished; and then, as they advanced in the dark, it was with no small difficulty that Temple pushed his way and enabled the women to follow him through the dense mass of ilex and arbutus that fringed the mouth of the cave, and effectually concealed it from all eyes save those of the foxes and mountain cats frequenting that district.

A few more steps brought them into open ground, and to the very spot from which Pendril first caught sight of Temple and Agnese at the well. But the scene had changed; and a spectacle, very different from that witnessed by him, now met their view. Near the margin of the rocky basin stood a band of gendarmes watching over the recumbent bodies of two comrades—one dead, the other dying. The groans of the latter could be distinctly heard as the men lifted him with gentle arms into the ambulance sent for his conveyance to the hospital at Ajaccio. A number of lamps borne by the gendarmes cast a lurid glare on the scene; and more than once Agnese fancied that one of the men turned an inquiring glance towards the spot on which she stood, as if he suspected espionage from that quarter; yet it was most improbable that any human eye

could penetrate the gloom that lay between them ; so, crouching low, they watched the proceedings at the well with intense interest. At length, when the cortége had slowly moved off, and every lamp had disappeared in the direction of Ajaccio, the foragers descended to the well.

Quickly was the water-jar filled to the brim ; and as Zara stepped off with the precious element, Temple detained Agnese with gentle force to whisper a few words of fierce passion in her ear, and to suggest instant flight. "There's no time for hesitation," he said ; "your father cannot hold his position above a day or two at farthest ; and then must fly ; so let us seize the present opportunity and escape together.

But Agnese did not hesitate a moment. "Don't urge me," she said, appealingly. "I should never forgive myself if I deserted my home at such a time."

Her father, she knew, would not venture to rest for a moment so long as she was absent from the Grotta ; and now that he was surrounded by a host of men intent upon his capture, she almost writhed with mortification at the proposal which Temple did not scruple to press upon her.

"I am no knight-errant," said Temple, biting

his lip with vexation and disappointment ; “ and if you will only follow my advice now, the day will assuredly come when you will bless me for having given it.

But Agnese heard him not ; and if Temple had not speedily pursued her through the dark jungle, he would never have discovered the mountain entrance to the cave again. However, after a somewhat rude treatment from the hollies and other bristling shrubs, he gained that spot with Agnese in time to avail himself of the torch now gleaming in Zara’s hands.

They had scarcely advanced ten steps along the silent passage, when the crackling brushwood in their rear warned them that, without doubt, they had been watched and followed to the cave. Zara became aghast at the discovery, and instantly dashing the torch to the ground, stepped upon it and extinguished the light. But it was too late ; the soldier, who had crawled after them with the caution of a chetah, had fairly viewed them to ground ; and then breaking the twigs to mark the spot, had rushed off with the welcome information to his comrades in the adjoining vale.

“ Agnese,” said Temple, whose self-possession did not for a moment forsake him, “ this is a

fatal discovery, and we must all be captured or killed to a certainty if we do not at once retrace our steps and escape into the bush."

"That is impossible," said Agnese, disengaging her arm from Temple's grasp; "my father's life is as dear to me as my own; and he must be informed of his danger before I can quit the Grotta."

But to grope their way in the dark through a mountain cavern, the passage of which was as circuitous and indirect as any in the catacombs of St. Calixtus, and whose formation was that of nature alone, required more time than Agnese bargained for.

Temple, now powerless to resist, followed his conductress in solemn mood—as Æneas might have followed the Sibyl on the left bank of the Styx,—meeting only with blocks of granite that broke his shins, instead of the Lernæan beast and the armed Chimæra.

On reaching at length the habitable part of the Grotta, Agnese, who was in advance of her companions, suddenly uttered a wail so plaintive and so full of despair that Temple rushed forward to ascertain the cause: he found Galofaro had disappeared; but how or whither, he could not for a moment conjecture.

He examined the parapet: not a stone of it

was displaced ; he looked for the rope, and it was hanging on the inside of the wall, as if no hand had touched it since Galofaro had swung himself within the barrier.

"Then," said Temple, "your father must have followed us into the bush, and escaped from the cave soon after we left it ; so, of course, he will not return."

This was precisely the case : the smuggler had waited patiently for the return of the party from the well ; but finding there was some hitch, he at once suspected that matters were going wrong in that quarter ; that either Temple had proved false and deserted him, which in reality he had attempted to do, or that the gendarmes had arrested them, and would immediately know that there must be a second entrance to the Grotta, a discovery which would be fatal to the smuggler's safety. So, with that instant decision of which he was capable, he abandoned the cave and entered the *macchie*, within the dense cover of which Galofaro could defy pursuit.

"Thank God he is gone," said Agnese, now fully aware of the peril from which her father had escaped ; "the *Morgana* will spread her white wings and bear him and all of us to a safer place."

But important as it was that the Grotta should

be vacated with as little delay as possible, it was still Agnese's and Zara's home. And if on being about to abandon it, perhaps for ever, to become houseless wanderers, and to be borne, God knows whither, in search of another home, these poor women lingered on the spot, and used little despatch in making the simple arrangements necessary for their departure, it will not be wondered at.

Under the influence of such feelings many a trifling object, long possessed, but of little worth, assumed a priceless value ; and, until these were collected and secured in two large handkerchiefs, Agnese was deaf to Temple's entreaties as to instant flight.

"This little mirror was my mother's," said Agnese, as she contrived with some difficulty to squeeze a small circular Moorish glass, set in mother-of-pearl, within the narrow limits of her travelling-kit.

"By all means take that," said Temple, whose stock of patience was now fairly exhausted ; "a woman without her mirror would be a truly pitiable object ; indeed, as a place of torment for the sex, hell itself would be incomplete if it were only furnished with looking-glasses."

Temple was in no humour at that moment to regard Agnese's feelings with the consideration

to which they were entitled; but had he possessed the spirit of a true man, and seen the painful expression that passed over her gentle face, he would have wished his tongue withered at the root ere he uttered that bitter sarcasm.

Zara had already secured her worldly goods, and bearing the bundle under her arm, was anxiously awaiting the completion of Agnese's arrangements. She had noted the impatience of Temple, and had arrived at the conclusion that the sooner the Grotta was abandoned the better would be their chance of safety.

"Hark!" said Temple, as the din of many voices rose from the foot of the precipice; "the valley seems alive with men. I'll fire a granite shot at them, and that, by drawing their attention to this point, will enable us to retreat securely on the mountain side."

There was another and a fiercer din, however, on that side which, from the length of the subterraneous passage, none of them at present heard. The soldier who had viewed them to ground had speedily returned with a score of comrades, who instantly set to work to clear the brushwood, and then to pile it, green wood and dry, on the mouth of the cave. In less than half an hour it was blocked as effectually as that of Macpelah.

"This is the only way to serve such vermin," said one of them, fiercer than the rest, as he applied a lighted match to the pile; "they must now either bolt or be smothered."

"But," said another, "the orders of the general were that we should on no account injure Galofare's women, or the Englishman who is with them."

"True," said the first; "but Louis's breast-bone has been smashed, and De Grenier has been whirled into eternity since those orders were given: they deserve, and shall have no quarter at my hands; so fire away, boys; let us burn them out like a nest of wasps!"

Before he had finished speaking, the pile was on fire at twenty different points; and instantly a sheet of flame, carrying with it a dense volume of white acrid smoke, shot like a flood into the cave. Impelled by a fresh night breeze, the flames licked up the grass with wondrous rapidity; and then getting by degrees a strong hold upon the green wood, which crackled, and seethed, and hissed, as if in absolute agony, the conflagration became intense, and the roar of it terrific. As an occasional puff of wind turned the current of the blaze, and sent the smoke, like a pillar of cloud, upwards to the stars, the interior of the cavern was illuminated by a world of light; the

roof glittered as if it were studded with diamonds, and even to the back recesses the fire seemed to gild the walls with streaks of burnished gold.

"Keep the fire going," shouted the fierce soldier to his comrades; "the smuggler was never in such hot quarters before; and unless he is the devil himself, we shall roast him now."

The men needed no encouragement; at least a dozen of them were hewing and hacking at the ilex and arbutus and holly-trees that encompassed the cave; while the rest were as busily employed in conveying the same to the hungry flames. It was a strange, savage, unearthly scene; and from the excitement and occasional coarse jokes in which the actors indulged, it was, beyond all doubt, a congenial pastime to all of them; but it was the pastime of fiends and not that of men.

But what of the inmates of that beleaguered cave? Agnese had scarcely concluded her arrangements for departure when the roar of the fire reached her ear, and this was instantly followed by a cloud of acrid, pungent smoke that almost stifled her. To advance in the face of it would have been certain death, and to retreat by the rock, a fate equally to be dreaded. For a few moments the brave girl was speechless with dismay; but as she approached the platform in front of the Grotta the sense of suffoca-

tion became less intense, and she gradually recovered self-possession.

"Galofaro was quite right to escape when he did," said Temple; "I wish I had followed his example at once, or rather had never returned to this entombment."

"We should, indeed, have taken your advice," said Agnese, submissively; "but it would have been a faithless act towards my father not to have returned to the Grotta, when he expected us. God forgive me if, in trying to save my father, I have brought this great trouble on you."

Then the poor girl buried her face in her hands, and wept aloud.

The continuous stream of smoke that poured through the cave drove them to the far corner of the platform to escape suffocation; and here, but for the parapet so hastily raised, they would have been exposed to the carbines of the gendarmes from the opposite side of the valley. However, till daybreak they were comparatively safe in this position.

But what an interval was it of anxiety, suspense, and even despair to each of them. The usually "wished-for morrow," which so often brings hope in its train, buoys up the sinking mariner with visions of help never to be realized, and even lights up with a momentary flicker the

lamp of expiring life, brought no hope to them; no prospect of promise, such as Moses enjoyed from Nebo, lifted up their hearts to bless the coming day; but rather, as the sun rose and gilded the tops of the surrounding hills, they saw the insecurity of their position increased tenfold, and became fully aware that, except by a miracle, escape was hopeless.

This conviction was followed by a long and painful pause; and what thronging memories it brought to each, but especially to Temple, can only now be guessed—every immoral act of his life, however, his filial impiety, the desertion of his friends, and his persevering but happily fruitless attempts to seduce Agnese from the path of virtue, rose, we may be sure, like so many spectres before his mind's eye at that moment.

"We are surrounded by a circle of fire," said Temple, as with his eye to a fissure in the parapet he counted at least a score of armed men patrolling the ground within a few yards of the staircase; others, too, were posted at various points on the opposite hill, carbine in hand, and watching, like so many lynxes, for their devoted prey. "I must have a pipe, Agnes," he continued, "and I have left mine within the Grotta—tobacco and all; do get it for me."

Agnese rose instantly from her recumbent

position ; and as her figure from the waist upwards became visible over the parapet, a dozen muzzles were at once levelled at her head ; but as quickly they were again lowered without a trigger having been touched. The word " a woman ! a woman !" had been passed around, and she was suffered to execute her errand unscathed.

Temple, who had not observed this act on the part of the gendarmes, then rose and seated himself on a block of stone, and while Agnese lighted a match and applied it to his pipe, he puffed away with apparently as much coolness and unconcern as a Moslem when he smokes and dreams of Mecca. But his head was above the line of the parapet ; and the whiffs of tobacco as they curled upwards, pointed out the spot exactly. Again the carbines were raised from the opposite hill, and this time the Val-dell'-Orco rung with the volley. The marksmen did their work too surely ; one bullet passed through Temple's brain, and as he staggered forward in his agony, Agnese fell over him, mortally wounded by several others.

Believing they had shot down Galofaro, the men raised a shout of exultation that shook the valley.

. The rest is soon told. General de Leseleuc

had arrived on the previous evening at Ajaccio on a visit to Mons. le Préfet; and, being informed of the death of De Grenier and the subsequent attack on the Grotta, had himself walked out, attended by a single aide-de-camp, to inspect the natural fortress now made famous by Galofaro's name. The general was just in time to hear the pæans of triumph raised by the gendarmes at their supposed victory.

So soon as the fire could be quenched, he ordered four picked men to enter the cave, and to bring out the living and the dead from its hold; and for the second time he added aloud, "On no account let the women or the Englishman be injured."

When after an hour's delay the party again came forth, bringing with them the mute woman, the wounded but still living Agnese, and the corpse of Temple, the general became almost speechless with pity and amazement. "This is a sad job, indeed," he said at length; "but where's Galofaro?"

To that question the gendarmes could only assure the general that they had searched every cranny of the cave minutely, and that the smuggler was not to be found. But Zara, by pointing towards the sea, satisfied the general that Galofaro had made his escape. The ambulance

that had conveyed De Grenier to the hospital was again despatched for poor Agnese ; but neither the general's solicitude nor the skill of the medical officer in attendance could arrest the tide of life, now ebbing fast, and about to leave the fair wreck stranded on the shores of eternity. Agnese died within a few yards of the well, the first trysting-place between herself and Temple ; and the remains of both, at the suggestion of the general, were consigned to one tomb in the cemetery of Ajaccio. Three days elapsed, however, before these heavy tidings could be conveyed to Pendril, deep in the forest of Aitone ; and, before he could arrive at Ajaccio, the last ceremony had taken place—the dust had been given to the dust, and a mound of fresh earth alone remained to indicate the spot where Temple and Agnese lay.

To him personally it was a heavy blow ; but, for the sake of the poor bereaved parents at home, Pendril really felt as if his hands were paralysed when he took up his pen to inform them of the event. This, however, was done with all the tenderness of which his soul was capable ; and in after years, when he reflected on the part he had taken in bringing about the tragedy, by inviting Temple to accompany him, and by supplying funds for the expedition, the

consolation came to him, like a ray of sunshine from the edge of a black cloud, that he had warned Temple seriously and earnestly of his danger, and done all in his power to 'save him from such a fate.

There is an old Spanish proverb which says, "When a woman gets into a man's head, there is no room for reason," so exclusively does she occupy it. And thus it was in Temple's case. Pendril might as well have attempted to turn a wild horse of the Pampas from his course, ere the coil of the lasso had fettered his limbs, as persuade Temple to abandon the life of unrestrained passion to which he died a slave.

Pendril returned at once to Ajaccio, accompanied by Tennyson, Will, and Brando; and, when he had dedicated a simple monument to the memory of his friend and poor Agnese, he set sail for England.

Zara entered the military hospital at Corte as a nurse, in which capacity her speechless condition proved to be no disadvantage.

The smuggler, escaping to the Eastern seas, became a notorious pirate; and to this very day, in the region of Ning-po, her Majesty's gunboat *Cockchafer*, though commanded by one of the smartest officers in the British navy—a Dayrell

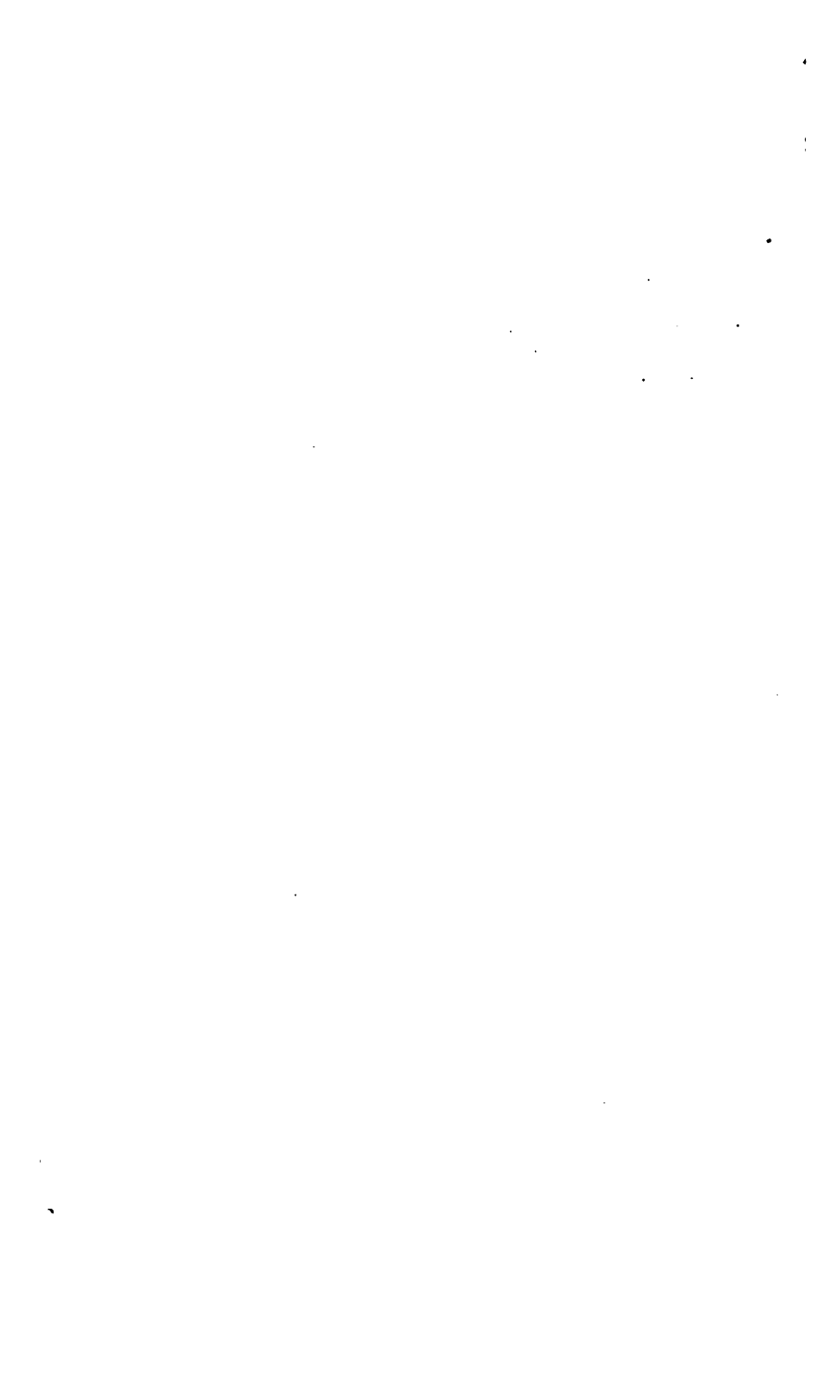
descended from Wild Dayrell himself—pursues Galofaro's junk in vain.

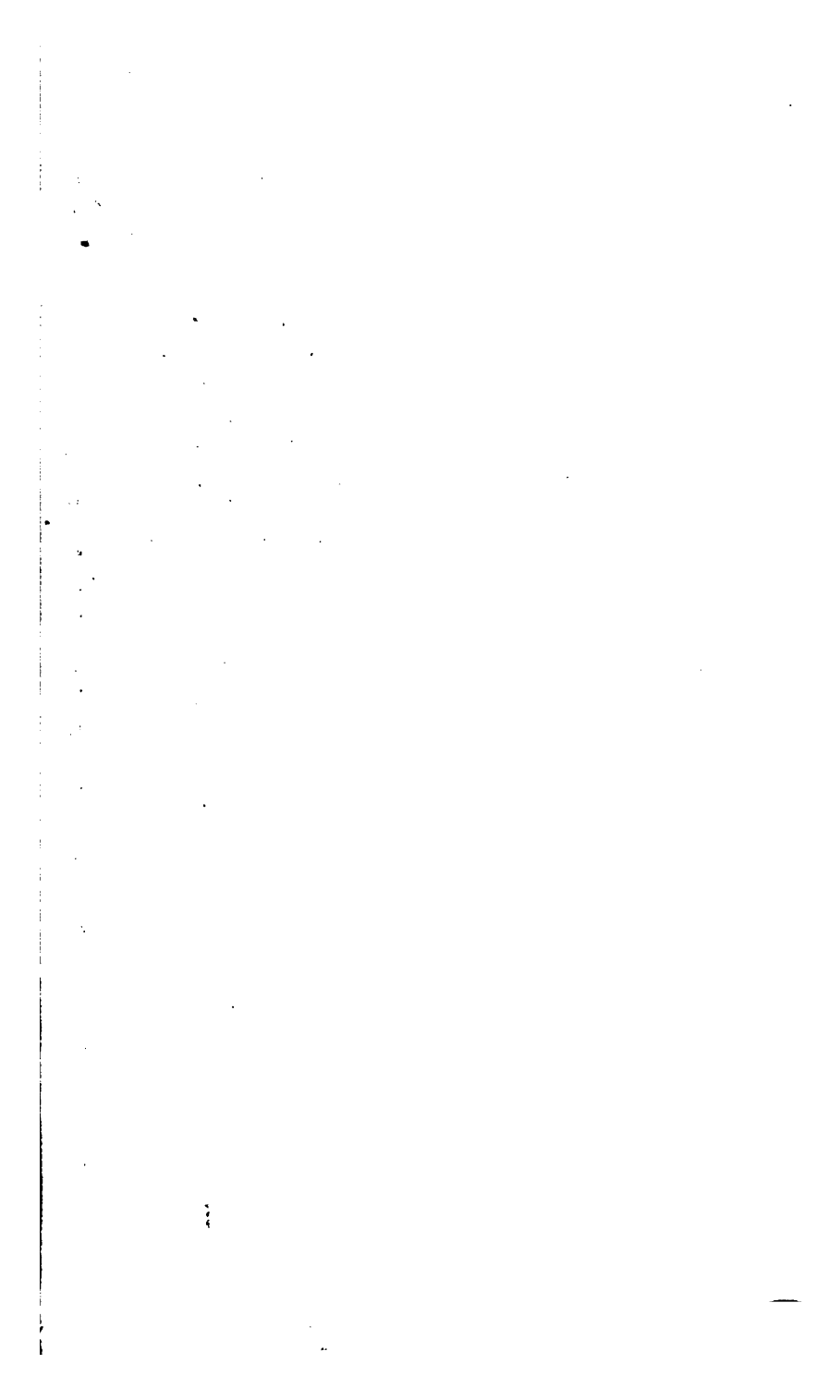
Tennyson still continues to be a wanderer from one country to another, but hitherto has resisted the annual Christmas invitation to Goodwell, which Pendril has never failed to send him from that day to the present. Brando, by the last accounts, had succeeded, after a long siege, in persuading Madame Fióre to surrender her many charms into his hands; but, notwithstanding his position as chief aubergiste in the town of Corte, no hunter ever visits the hotel without finding him always ready for a raid at the mouflon; and on these occasions, when the spirit of the braconnier breaks out, Brando's glory is complete if, with a brace of gendarmes on his heels, he can lead them a dance over the roughest and most inaccessible tracts of that mountain-land.

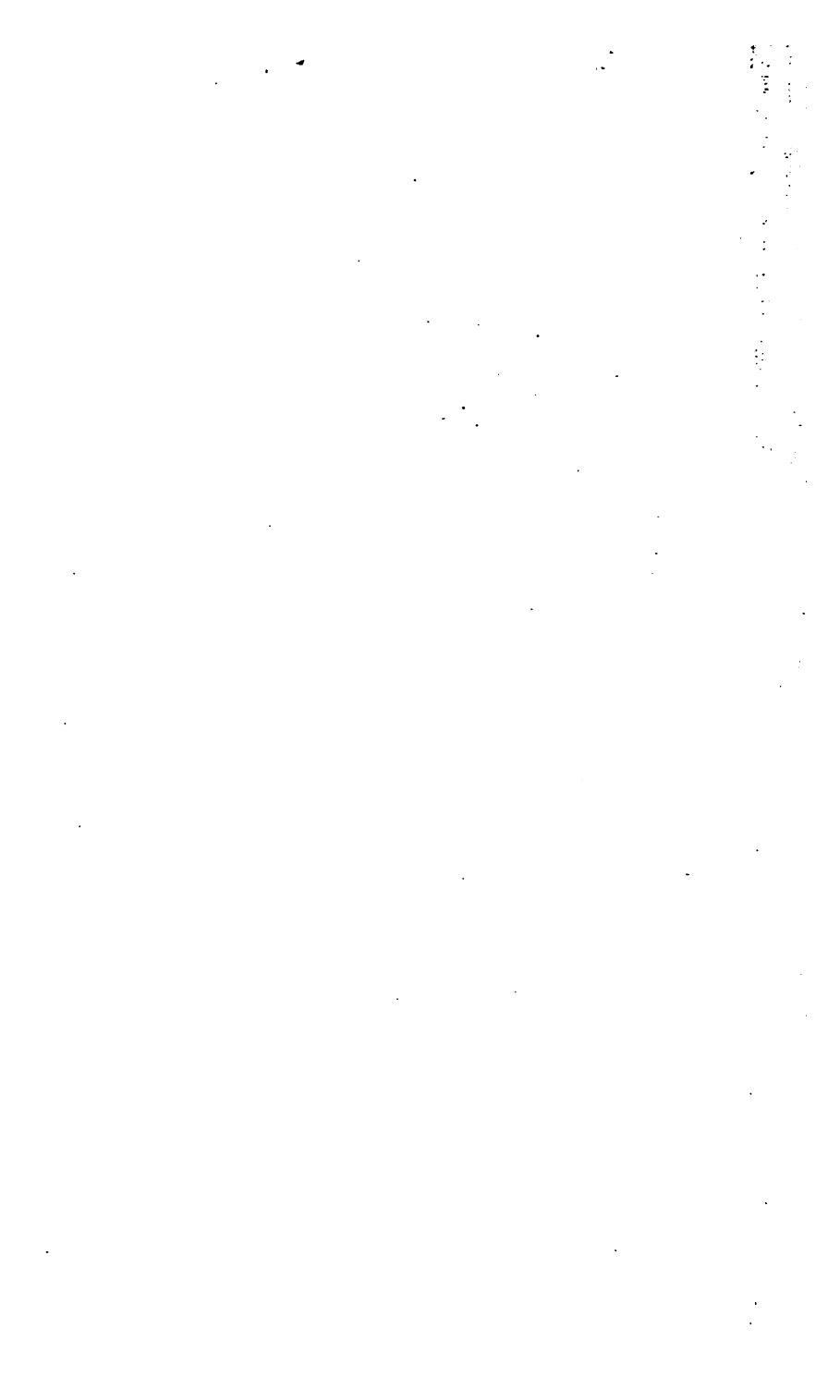
THE END.

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